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AINSLIE'S

The Magazine That Entertains

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A Twenty-Cent AINSLEE'S

BEGINNING with the January issue, AINSLEE'S will be sold at twenty cents per copy. The advance in price is necessitated partly because of the remarkable program of fiction which we have laid out for the coming year, and partly because of the greatly increased cost of manufacturing a magazine in these extraordinary times.

This change is entirely in keeping with AINSLEE'S policy. We have never sought to make a publication to fit a certain price. It has always been our aim to put together the most entertaining magazine possible, regardless of cost, to manufacture as economically as possible and to give the result to the public at the lowest possible price.

Twice before in our twenty years, we have advanced our price, and in each instance the added features which the increase enabled us to give our public, brought us an actual increase in circulation. In other words, the class of readers to which AINSLEE'S makes its appeal wants AINSLEE'S—not a magazine as nearly like AINSLEE'S as can be made at any certain price. With our readers it is “AINSLEE'S—how much?” not “Here is fifteen cents—what can I get for it?”



AINSLEE'S was started in 1898 as a five-cent magazine of under a hundred pages. Among the frequent contributors of fiction that very first year were Stanley J. Weyman, Anthony Hope, Harold MacGrath, Theodore Dreiser, Opie Read, Albert Bigelow Paine, Morgan Robertson, Bret Harte, and A. Conan Doyle. The magazine was a brilliant literary success, but at five cents a copy, how could we do it? At the end



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No. 5.



Such Things as Films Are Made of

By E. Goodwin

SHORTLY after noon on a sunny Sunday morning in the spring of 175—, the usual crowd of gallantly dressed ladies and gentlemen were taking the air and displaying their graces in Hyde Park. Ruffles and wigs, patches, hoops, flowing robes, swords—with high civilities and flowery compliments passing freely, that artificial, yet fascinating life bubbled its hour away.

Among the rest moved Mr. Frederick Rokesley. Mr. Rokesley's dress was as gallant in cut as the rest, even though its quality, like the quality of its owner's mind, would not bear a close inspection. Mr. Rokesley was thirty, tall, good-looking, a humbug, possessed of ninety pounds a year, a taste for poetry, some acquaintance with the guitar, and a determination to avoid work and marry money.

And see! Among the beautiful ladies in the crowd moves one whose charm of face and figure may vie with the best of them. Miss Fanny O'Rourke was fashionably dressed, though here again was a lack of quality in the making up. Fanny was Irish—possibly you have guessed that?—twenty-three, unscrupulous, an orphan, and passionately determined to marry money.

She possessed, also, in the background, a wonderful grandmother.

Miss O'Rourke and Mr. Rokesley being thus in the same crowd, fate could not well miss the ironic opportunity. They met—they glanced. They passed—repassed. Eye spoke to eye, and eye to eye responded. A dropped handkerchief, a deft appropriation, a gallant return with such a bow, acknowledged with such an air, a compliment, a blush—the whole affair positively arranged itself. It was a humble, even a shabby lodging off Clarges Street to which Frederick escorted Fanny that Sunday morning, but as he left her at her door, with a bow above criticism, she had already hinted that there was a "story," and he availed himself at the first opportunity of her invitation to call.

It was a wonderful "story," at first only hinted, revealed at last with affecting reluctance, a thing of sighs and melancholy, most intriguing. She was—Could she trust him? She could? Well, then, she was an orphan. The skinny old lady in the background was her dear old nurse—so devoted! From her tender infancy, she had been under the strict care of a stern guardian, an unpleasant man—a schemer.

As she grew up, she had learned two things—that at twenty-one—"another two months, sir"—she would inherit a fortune of five thousand pounds a year, and that her stern guardian was endeavoring to force her into a marriage with his son, an ill-bred fellow. But Fanny was a girl of spirit and, secretly selling some of her jewels, she and her dear old nurse had run away, and were now living in this modest obscurity, her affairs, thank Heaven, in the hands of an honest lawyer who had completely mastered the scheming guardian. Only another two months and she could safely emerge from hiding and take possession of her fortune.

A moving story, most romantic. Told as Fanny could tell it, it did Mr. Rokesley's business. Conceive his agitation as he listened. Conceive his pondering within himself whether he had the ingenuity, the daring to— He determined to try it.

Would that he could tell her all, in his turn! But no, on much of his story his lips were sealed—for the time. Still, this much she might know—a great family; a disputed marriage; a slur on his birth; the discovery of some documents; consternation in "very high circles;" the attempt to compromise; his stern refusal—"for the sake of my sainted mother's name, Miss Fanny"; his present poverty, nobly borne; the shifts and subterfuges of his wealthy and titled antagonist; the glittering gold already gleaming through the gloom!

They married.

Rokesley could scarcely believe that such fortune was to be his—and Fanny was nervous. Before the very altar, each secretly looked around fearfully, dreading some catastrophic interruption. But no! The vows are spoken, the ring is on, the register signed, the fees paid—she's his—he's hers! Joy, and away to her lodgings for the wedding breakfast! After which, with some nervousness, a disclosure on his part.

After which, with no nervousness at all, but with an alarming display of temper, parallel disclosures on her part. After which, granny!—granny!!—granny!!!—unending granny, skinny, yellow, and of a fury apparently unabateable.

They moved to Colebrook Row, Islington. They had one hundred and thirty pounds a year to share among them. Mr. Rokesley's share was not much. You would have thought that since, in law, he was absolute possessor of his wife's income as well as his own, his position was not so bad. But there was granny. If you had known her, you would have understood. She managed things. She managed Rokesley, managed his money. Rokesley went no more to the park on Sunday mornings. His chief amusement was his guitar. He did not play it well. Fifteen months after their marriage, he played it worse than ever. His skill was no less, but with a three-months-old baby on each arm— You see?

One day, in Colebrook Row, Rokesley encountered an old gentleman in a long brown coat who took snuff and inquired for one Mr. Frederick Rokesley.

"What's it about, first?" inquired the now cautious Rokesley.

"It's about money."

"Then Mr. Rokesley's moved out of this neighborhood some time ago."

"Dear me, how unfortunate! It's such a large sum of money."

"Is it money for him?"

"It is."

"Then I'm him."

"And are you the son of Mr. John Rokesley, of Aylesbury, farmer, now deceased?"

"I am."

"Could you prove your identity?"

"I could."

"Then bring proofs to my office—Frost, Frigid & Frump, 137 Bloomsbury Square—at three this afternoon,

my dear sir, and I'll have some pleasant news for you."

At three o'clock that day, or, to be precise, at ten minutes past three, Mr. Rokesley, having recovered from the slight fit into which the news had at first swept him, listened to the retelling of the glad tidings. His father's only brother, Andrew Rokesley, had left England fifty years before, had remained childless, had made a fortune, had left his money to his brother or his heirs, and had died. Rokesley had come into forty thousand pounds.

Rokesley never returned to Colebrook Row. From that moment, he vowed never to go near there again. He left his Fanny, his grandmother-in-law, his twin offspring—left them absolutely to fate and Fanny's forty pounds a year. Thought he, "I'm done with them forever!" Thought he!

Rokesley, handsomely set up in funds by the solicitors, as a temporary accommodation, went to Nottingham. He had determined to buy an estate and settle down as a country gentleman. Some one had mentioned that Nottinghamshire had some pretty country in it, so he went there and put up at The Bell.

The Bell at Nottingham was a fine old inn. Rokesley, with plenty of money, was made very comfortable. He enjoyed life. Looking over eligible estates and empty houses was a not unpleasant way of passing the time. Many idle people find it so even nowadays. Ask any firm of house agents.

He dressed well, lived well; his mercenary spirits rose even above the high level of his fortunes. He was regarded with interest. He felt himself a man of importance. He patronized the tailor, the hosier; he liked them to wait on him for orders in his private room at The Bell, where, as they solicited his custom, a miniature painter worked at his likeness.

He became a blood. He ogled the girls. He ogled a lady in Nottingham

High Street; he had a happy recollection of how the thing was done in Hyde Park. Such a neck she had, such an ankle! Evidently married, but what grace, what charm!

It was about midday. Lunch was served Rokesley that day in his private room at The Bell, and the lady lunched with him. She was a dear, romantic creature, with something of a bear—a plain, blunt, practical man—for a husband. Dreadfully blunt and practical—for at two o'clock he suddenly burst into Rokesley's room with a friend, boxed his wife's ears, and pulled Mr. Rokesley's nose. If the lady had not been there, Frederick would probably have accepted the affront meekly enough, but, alas, for his dignity's sake, he must swagger. He did so, put his hand to his sword hilt, and in no time found himself the recipient of a challenge.

"All right, my buck! If that's what you want, meet me at five o'clock in the field behind the graveyard. Bring a friend, if ye've got one, or if not, I'll find a second for ye. Swords or pistols. And look'ee—mind ye do come, or, begad, I'll come here and put a cudgel round you!"

And with that, exit the practical husband, and his wife, very meek and subdued, and his friend, grinning.

Mr. Rokesley was unhappy. Quite a number of people had seen the nose pulling, had heard the challenge. You can't keep hotel servants in their places, or stop their mouths, under such circumstances. The doorway of his room had been crowded. The conversation at The Bell that afternoon was all about Rokesley's nose. It burned, as ears are said to do.

Rokesley was in some things a man of great determination and swiftness of decision. It is true that he sat almost motionless in his chair from ten minutes past two till ten minutes to five. Once, following the line of his thoughts, he drew his rapier from its scabbard, felt

its point—shuddered, put it back, and resumed his brooding.

But as the dreadful hour drew near, he showed himself the man of action. Outside, beneath his window, from the great courtyard of The Bell, rose the bustle and stir preliminary to the departure of the Bath coach. He rose, went to the window, and looked down. He reflected. Already, no doubt, that horrible man was making his way to the field "behind the graveyard," with friends, one of whom—possibly all of whom—would be willing, nay, anxious, to act as his, Rokesley's, second. Blood-thirsty crew! And there was the coach—with vacant seats, no doubt—just about to start for Bath.

Down the stairs went Rokesley, hat on head, coat on arm.

"My bill!" he cried.

They brought it him. The addition was shocking, but he paid the amount without a glance. The servants crowded round for tips. He tipped them handsomely, lavishly. They were not grateful; they jeered. Some one must have passed a word along the High Street. The tailor appeared with half-finished suits over his arm.

"What about these?" he queried.

"How much?"

A lightning miscalculation; then, "Forty pounds," was the reply.

"Curse you!" said Rokesley—and paid.

The hosier came, too, the hatter, the jeweler. Rokesley cursed again and paid. Quite a large crowd had gathered in the yard, all taking an absorbing interest in Rokesley's departure. Some kindly soul suggested, "Run to the field by the graveyard and tell—" It was awful! But, thank goodness, he was in his place, outside; the guard was up; the driver was up.

Who's this, panting into the yard, waving something in his hand and shouting, "What about this, your honor?" Why, the miniature painter!

Rokesley passed him five guineas, took the miniature, dashed it into the yard.

And who are these, in a group, just hurriedly entering the yard? Heavens! 'Tis the man who had pulled his nose and a dozen friends—in a great hurry. But the horses' heads are free, the cloths off. Crack goes the whip; "Ta-ra-ra! Ta-ta-ra!" goes the horn; out under the archway passes the coach, turns, gathers speed, and—oh, glorious!—away they go on the Bath Road, with such a roar of cheering as never yet greeted the departure of any coach out of Nottingham.

In The Bell yard a quiet gentleman of advanced years, sitting on a steady cob, looked on amused at the hubbub and asked what it was all about. It so chanced that he put his query to the miniature painter, who took a pride in not only giving him full details, but in displaying Rokesley's painted likeness.

"Here he is," he explained. "I never made a better portrait, and he threw it away!"

"It really is a good likeness," agreed the gentleman on the cob.

"You saw him, sir?"

"Oh, yes, poor devil!"

It was, as you shall see, very unfortunate for Rokesley that the old gentleman had seen him. He had the keenest eyes and was an obstinate man, not easily hoodwinked—or lightly persuaded out of a belief.

Next day Rokesley was at Bath, out and about, in perhaps subdued spirits. Nottingham as well as London had now to be avoided, and Bath stands in pretty country. Rokesley set himself to find an estate suited to his new position. Among others, he looked over Powderley Hall. The agent could not say for certain that it would be let, but Lady Powderley, the old lady who owned it, never came there. The place was furnished, but kept shut up. There was a caretaker who didn't mind living there

alone; he would no doubt show the gentleman over.

So Rokesley saw over Powderley Park and the Hall, a gallant place, stately, spacious, in the library of which the caretaker evidently chose to move and have his being. The man made no apology. There was his bed, none too cleanly in appearance, in the corner, and a kitchen table by the fire; pots and pans on the hearth, plates, a jug or two, the impedimenta of a common man living and sleeping here by himself. The bookcases were evidently never opened. The place was fascinating, but too big and too expensive for Rokesley. He tipped the man at parting and noticed on the dirty extended palm a large red scar of old standing.

Within a week, he had chosen a house, set himself to get it furnished, and was soon installed as a gentleman of substance.

Rokesley was accepted quite eagerly by some people, not so eagerly or even easily by others. Country neighbors can be wonderfully distant. Sir Francis Warriolow, for instance, the stately old widower with but one beautiful daughter—such a wonderful girl, tall, with a matchless poise of the head and such a complexion, such eyes, such a walk!

But Rokesley was a married man, you say. Good heavens, would he dare? He would. Don't you know that there are quite a number of people blessed or cursed with the ability to convert any unpleasant reality they wish to be rid of into a mere figment of the imagination? Facts can be slurred off into fancies with the greatest ease, if desired. Fanny, the twins, his grandmother-in-law—yes, even she—were slurred in this fashion. Rokesley had not the slightest difficulty in fancying himself into a single man. And he fell hopelessly in love with Amelia Warriolow.

He courted the girl with enthusiasm. He was a man of artistic temperament,

despite his vulgarity and the essential commonness of his cheap little soul, and here was beauty undeniable, of the rarest sort. She set him ablaze—and took fire herself. He was good looking; he sang well; he played the guitar—what an instrument, look you, where-with to assail a young lady of romantic temperament!—he painted, not badly; he wrote verses. To her they seemed immortal things. For one thing, they were all about herself.

Turn, turn your eyes away!

she read, and quivered as she read.

They shine too darkly bright.

You smile, and it is day;

You frown and it is night.

Love fashioned you aright

The hearts of men to smite.

Smite, then, but do not slay!

Turn, turn your eyes away!

Beautiful, beautiful!

Veil, veil your lovely face,

O'ershade it with your hair. .

I tremble as I trace—

But there! Why take up your time? You can no doubt do this sort of thing better than Rokesley.

Sir Francis did not like Rokesley. Why, he could not explain, but there was the feeling. Rokesley was clever enough to try no lies, or, rather, to lie with extreme caution. He confessed himself merely of good Aylesbury farming stock, settled in Hertfordshire for four hundred years. Good fortune had sent him a handsome competency. He had education. He aspired, he admitted, beyond his rank, but Amelia loved him and told her father so. Sir Francis was stubborn, but something like an engagement established itself.

One day an old friend of Sir Francis', who had come to Bath, called on him and saw the two lovers together.

"Who's that?" he asked, and Sir Francis explained.

"I've met him," said the old friend.

"Where?"

"I'm trying to think— Aha! Good

heavens! Nottingham—The Bell—Francis, old friend, I must tell you—”

He told Sir Francis. This old friend was no other than the gentleman on the cob who had witnessed Rokesley's departure on the Bath coach.

Sir Francis grew red.

“Damme, Ned!” he said. “He's intending to marry my daughter! I never liked him—and now— Are you sure?”

“Let's be careful. I'll take no man's character away lightly. I think it's the man. In myself I'm sure of it, but I wouldn't swear to him. Shall we ask him?”

“Aye, and at once,” answered Amelia's father, and the two strode in search of the lovers.

On a stone seat in the rose garden the two were found, and the question was put very bluntly to Rokesley.

“Mr. Rokesley, this is my friend, Mr. Bantrick. He tells me of something he saw at Nottingham not so long ago”—Rokesley could not tell whether or not he kept his face steady—and I'm asking you plainly, were you once there?”

“Nottingham—Nottingham? Never in my life, sir.”

“Think again, Mr. Rokesley, I beg,” said Mr. Bantrick. “I've a good memory for faces, and I am strongly of opinion that I once saw you at The Bell, or, rather, on the Bath coach at The Bell at Nottingham, some three months ago. Am I not right?”

“You are wrong, sir,” said Rokesley firmly.

But the matter did not end here. Sir Francis kept questioning; his friend, without being deliberately contradictory, was very insistent. Rokesley was in a cold sweat. Amelia, too, gathered that there was something behind all this.

“Papa, if Frederick says he has never been to Nottingham, why, he hasn't.”

It was not till Rokesley got home that he recognized the one mistake he had made. He had most carefully

avoided putting the obvious question as to what were the circumstances under which Mr. Bantrick imagined he had seen him. He knew that he had left grave doubts behind him at Warrilow Hall.

Sir Francis and Mr. Bantrick were both simple and straightforward men. They discussed matters. The affair was of moment. Within three days, Mr. Bantrick alighted in Nottingham from the Bath coach and made inquiries for the miniature painter. He got what he sought in no time.

“I've got the thing now, sir. Five guineas the gentleman paid me for it, and threw it down in The Bell yard! It's a lovely likeness.”

“May I buy this?”

“Well, in a manner it's sold, sir—but he threw it away. It's really of no use to me except as a specimen— Would a guinea—”

The guinea was paid, and two days later Sir Francis and Mr. Bantrick had another interview at Warrilow Hall with Rokesley, Amelia, proud, confident in her lover, looking on. Rokesley faced the miniature coolly.

“Remarkably like me, I admit, and a capital piece of painting, if I may say so, but it is not my likeness—that is, it was not painted from me. I've never sat for a painting in my life.”

“And never been to Nottingham?”

“Never.”

“Sure?” The two old gentlemen were very persistent.

“Absolutely, sir, on my honor.”

Sir Francis looked at Mr. Bantrick. Mr. Bantrick took snuff and then spoke.

“I've been thinking things over very carefully, Frank,” he said, “and in my own mind I am quite certain that this is the gentleman I saw on the coach in the yard of The Bell at Nottingham. He says he was never there. I don't believe him.” He then told the whole story to Amelia.

There was fury from Rokesley, ad-

mirably acted, but Mr. Bantrick never turned a hair. He stuck to it; he was ready to back his opinion with his sword if pressed—Rokesley forbore taking him up—and there he left things.

Amelia flamed. Her lover a coward? Never, never! She knew—she knew his nature, his gallant lion's heart! Oh, it was infamous!

Sir Francis spoke briefly.

"I don't deny that I never wished you for a son-in-law, Mr. Rokesley," he said, "and now I won't have it. I won't have a man whose reputation for courage is blown upon for my daughter's husband."

"Father——"

"That's enough! Mr. Rokesley, my daughter is not for you. Amelia, you will go to London for a while."

"I will not!"

"Don't talk like that to me. Up to London shall you go. I'll put you in charge of an old friend of mine. You'll soon be cured of this unfortunate attachment. Mr. Rokesley, I'll thank you to leave."

Rokesley left, making a not undignified exit. Amelia was in a fury of tears and indignation. Two days later, stonily acquiescing in the inevitable, she accompanied her father by coach to London, and found herself installed in the house of one of the gayest, most sympathetic, and most cunning old ladies in the world, Lady Powderley, who owned the great house shut up for so long not far from Warrilow Hall.

Amelia determined to hate her, and failed. She determined to be miserable at least, but Lady Powderley insisted on trying to make her happy. It was difficult to resist her, but for the fact that Rokesley slipped up to London, got hold of Amelia's maid, and arranged for the passage of letters. Rokesley's were properly gloomy and kept Amelia sympathetically miserable, even though they also kept her convinced of his worthiness and unshaken fidelity.

Amelia never permitted herself to doubt. She was staunchness itself—and, in spite of herself, London really agreed with her very well and she looked lovelier than ever. Old Lady Powderley glowed as she looked at her, and sent a letter off to her nephew, John Mollett, first lieutenant on the *Triton*, one of the finest of his majesty's ships of the line, then lying at Portsmouth, bidding him up to London for a visit, when he could get leave.

He got that letter on the same day that he got his captaincy. There had been a brisk little affair in connection with the cutting out of a slaver from harbor in one of the Portuguese West African ports. John Mollett had been given his chance in that affair and had made a brilliant success of it. He had a rare head on him, was courage itself; the men loved him; the whole business had gone through like clock-work; and his promotion to a captaincy had been looked upon as a certainty. Together with his promotion came actual appointment to a frigate now preparing at Portsmouth. He let his aunt's invitation wait a while and looked after business first, like a good sailor.

Just at this time, the roads about Bath began to be infested by a highwayman. Three times in one week, coaches were stopped and the passengers robbed by a mounted man. A strange horseman was seen in the dusk by several people not far from the gates of Powderley Hall. Some one suggested that he might even have a lurking place in the park itself; parts of this were wild and wooded. A visit of investigation was paid. The caretaker at the Hall, however, declared that he went about the place frequently and never saw traces of an intruder. One night a cloaked horseman was captured—and turned out to be the innocent caretaker himself, riding home from Pratstone with provisions. The Hall was a long way from a village, and Lady Powder-

ley allowed the man a horse for his occasional journeys.

Rokesley went to a ball at Bath one night and returned by coach with some half dozen other guests soon after midnight. They had reached Bramboro Dip at a comfortable, jogging pace, when suddenly the coach began to dash along at high speed, the passengers to bump together. All was excitement—and then a horseman was seen swiftly gliding past the windows, a word of command went to the driver, and the coach stopped.

In less than a minute, Rokesley and the others were standing in the road in line, and the mounted man, masked, taciturn, was piling into his big coat pockets their purses, watches, seals, snuff boxes, and other trinkets. They were ordered in, the coach moved off, and Rokesley's first experience of being robbed on the highway was over.

He sat up in bed, jerking wide awake from a sound sleep, two hours later. He had fallen asleep puzzling over an incident of that exciting, humiliating encounter with the highwayman. The moon had been full, and as he had handed his purse to the highwayman, he had noted on the outstretched palm a large red scar of old standing. You remember? Rokesley, recalling it, had failed to remember where he had seen it before. Quite suddenly, in his sleep, it had come to him!

Soon after breakfast, Rokesley rode over to Powderley Hall and saw the caretaker. He spoke briefly.

"You are the highwayman. Keep back, or I'll shoot you." He pulled out a pistol. "I saw that scar on your right hand, and I'll swear to you. But I mean no harm. In fact, if you care to come to an arrangement with me, it will be all to your profit."

He told his plan. The highwayman stood doubting. Rokesley handed him ten guineas. The caretaker assented.

"When's it to be, guv'nor?"

"I'll let you know—in a week or two, I dare say."

"And how shall I make sure of the young lady? There might be more than one on the coach."

"She shall wear, say, a green cloak and hood."

On this they parted.

Rokesley's next letter to Amelia contained the following:

"You say you will leave London on Tuesday next for your father's birthday. Then, dearest Amelia, consent to join me in an endeavor I am devising to lay to rest forever your father's cruel doubts as to my valor. I have encountered the highwayman I have told you of. He will stop the coach from London that night and make pretense to abduct you. Make but a faint resistance. He will put you on his horse before him and order the coach away, when at that instant I shall come riding up. There will be some shooting and a scuffle, plenty of noise, oaths, swearing, and then I will seize you from him and he'll ride off. 'Twill seem a tremendous affair in the darkness, and be sure the tale will lose nothing in the telling by the other passengers. In all fairness, your father can have no further objections to the man who thus rescues his daughter."

Amelia did not like the scheme. She wrote and said so, but Rokesley, replying, pressed her into it. What else could they do, he asked. She knew his courage, doubtless, but her father must be convinced. The situation was absurd, of course, and they were justified in utilizing this bit of ingenuity. His darling Amelia must consent—and would she be careful to wear this gift, a handsome green silk cloak and hood he sent with his letter?

What could she do but consent? When she left London on the appointed day, it was with the full knowledge that as the coach-topped Dunkerley Hill, some three miles away from her home,

shortly after nine o'clock that night by scheduled time, the desperate affair thus laid out was to be carried through.

Lady Powderley saw Amelia off by coach and, returning home, found John Mollett waiting to see her. She kissed him—he was her favorite nephew—but upbraided him.

"Why didn't you come a fortnight ago when I wrote to you? There's the finest girl, the best-hearted and the prettiest that ever stepped in shoe leather, just gone back to the country, and you've missed seeing her!"

"My dear aunt," Mollett replied in his grave fashion, "I'm a sailor, and you surely know that sailors don't take the slightest interest in pretty girls."

She boxed his ears. She boxed them hard. She was really annoyed. She also set her clever old brains to work. She had a knack of getting her own way.

"Jack," she said, "now you have condescended to come, I've something else you can do for me. D'ye know there's a highwayman on the Bath Road, and they do say the fellow has the impudence to make his lair somewhere in my park there. Go there, catch him, and get him hanged or sent to the hulks."

"Certainly. When?"

"You may as well go down to-day. I'm in a rage with you, Jack, and shan't feel well disposed to you for a week."

"All right. I'll start now, then. I'll post off. With proper changes, I ought to be there by nightfall. I might even have the luck to be stopped by the highwayman; in which case you shall have his head by breakfast time the day after to-morrow."

He kissed her and went off. She followed him into the hall, other plans in her head.

"Call on a friend of mine, Sir Francis Warrilow. Say I sent you. He'll put you up, and you can look for the highwayman at your leisure."

Posting fast, with frequent changes of horses, he reached Bath by five in the afternoon, overtaking and passing near Reading the coach from London to Bath in which Amelia was sitting in her green cloak and hood. She did not see him, but he had a good view of her.

"By Jove, what a lovely girl!" he thought. "And how fascinating that green hood was!"

Quite true; it was.

At Bath, after a meal and a stroll round the town, he hired a horse and determined to ride back along the road from London and call at Warrilow Hall. The sun was down, night hard on him, the road moonlit, the air chill. He crossed Powderley Common, and as he rounded a ragged group of beeches near a pond, a horseman, masked, moved swiftly out of their shadows, a pistol gleamed, and a hoarse voice invited him to yield up his valuables or his life.

John Mollett was a cool man; the pistol's argument was imperative. He reined in, plunged his hand into his breeches' pocket, pulled out his purse, disentangled his watch—and aimed a smashing blow with his riding whip at the other's head. He was not quick enough. The pistol partly parried the blow, exploding at the same time; both horses reared; and then the captain was lying motionless in the road, face-downward, while his horse trotted a little way, pulled up, and waited, startled, but too undecided to run off.

It was evident that the highwayman desired no such end to their interview. He started to turn his horse's head and gallop away, then halted, listened. The night was still and soundless. He alighted and came back to the motionless form, stooped over it, turned it over—and with an oath went sprawling down in the road as the captain's hands shot up and grasped his throat. Now in the moonlight, now in the shade, now

rolling over and over, now on their feet together and locked in desperate contest, the two men fought. Down they went again, and as they fell, the highwayman's hand grasped from the dust his empty pistol. Wrenching his arm free, he brought the butt down on Mollett's forehead. The captain's hold gave way; he rolled over feebly. The highwayman scrambled up; the captain made a grab at his coat and caught it; the highwayman wrenched free again, ran down the road, scrambled into the saddle, turned his nag's head, and sped away across the common.

Dizzy and faint, the captain tottered to his horse in turn, swung himself across, and gave pursuit. At first so sick from the blow was he that he could do little but keep his seat, but he was tough, the air was bracing, he was a vengeful man, and plainly enough the highwayman had had enough of it and it was only a question of speed.

On they went, no sound save the thud of the racing hoofs, the pant of steaming breath—over the furze bushes, over ditches, through shallow ponds, the eerie moonlight sending their black shadows flying before them. They struck a moss-grown path leading among trees, both men stooping low as they rode to avoid drooping branches. Then came a field of plow, another wood, then a meadow, a fence and ditch, more meadow, a rush across a grand avenue of elms that even in his haste John Mollett guessed somehow was part of his aunt's park, then a bank, a ditch, a meadow again, and then—joy!—a tall fence at which the highwayman's horse most plainly balked.

Not fifty yards ahead, the highwayman acted with decision, slipped out of his saddle, scrambled over the fence, and ran for it. Mollett went straight on, gathered his tired nag together under him, brought him up to the fence well in hand, gave him an encouraging cut with his whip—and came a fearful

purler on the other side. His horse had refused, point-blank.

Dizzy, but with no bones broken, he ran after the flying figure in front of him, saw a great house loom up in the moonlight, found himself on a broad terrace, with tall windows on his right hand and a gallant flight of steps leading down to a garden on his left, and knew himself gaining on the panting figure, ahead no more now than a dozen paces.

Spurt, captain! Spurt, highwayman! Their heavy riding boots thumped the gravel as the highwayman rounded the end of the terrace, tore along to the next corner, plunged round it, Mollett now on his very heels, darted at a door in the wall, dashed into it, turned and slammed it—No! Not quite! Mollett had turned, too, just in time to get his foot in the doorway. For a second or so both men stood panting and exhausted, and then Mollett shoved his way in. Into the gloom of the house stumbled the highwayman, down a dark passage, then another, and then, as he opened a door, Mollett caught him.

They were in a large room with bookcases round the wall, a fire burning, candles alight on a table, a bed in one corner—and by this bed the highwayman put up his last poor fight. Twice Mollett smashed him in the face with a big-knuckled fist, and then—surrender. The rogue ceased struggling, allowed himself to be flung down on the bed, made a feeble deprecating motion with his hand, and lay there panting. Mollett dropped into a chair, triumphant, but as spent as his opponent, and for a space the two men could do nothing but draw breath and slowly recover control of their exhausted frames.

Mollett stirred first and stood up. The highwayman sat on the edge of the bed.

"So you're the man!" said Mollett. "Out after the coach again?"

"Perhaps I was. Anyhow, it's my

last ride, I suppose," came the sullen answer. "And yet, believe me, sir, I wasn't after purses to-night."

"No?"

"No. I done very well lately—if you can call it well when it don't benefit me a stiver."

"What d'ye mean?"

"You look in the top drawer over there"—he indicated a bureau on the other side of the room—"and you'll see."

Keeping his eye on the man, Mollett crossed the room and opened the drawer. It was full of plunder—purses, watches, seals, evidently the accumulated spoils of many a raid. Mollett turned for an explanation.

"You see, I ain't properly a lad on the road," said the highwayman, with an ingenuous touch of apology in his tones. "I'm a sailor. Left my ship without leave—"

"A deserter?"

"Call it that. And I got this job of caretaker, and learned to ride a horse, and the life was so dull and lonely I took to riding about o' nights and fancying myself as a bit of a buck. And then one night a chap on horseback bolted when I met him, and that put the idea in my head. But bless you, your honor, when once I got the things, I didn't know what to do with 'em. I ain't a thief, leastways not a proper thief. I didn't want the things so much as the fun of taking them."

Something in the look and tone of the rascal seemed to vouch for the truth of his fantastic story.

"You can tell that tale to the justices, my lad," Mollett replied, "and if they believe you, it may save your neck. And what about trying to shoot me?" he demanded sternly.

"I never. I always carry the pistol, and once before I've let it off, but I took good care not to go anywhere near any one. It went off to-night without me meaning it. I carried it in my hand

just to make the business look a bit more reallike for the lady."

"What lady?"

"A young lady I was to lift off the coach from London."

"Lift a lady—a young lady!"

"Only in fun, your honor. It was like this," and into Mollett's astonished ears the highwayman confided the story of his arrangement with Rokesley.

Spite of himself, Mollett began to grin as he listened. There was something in the aspect of the man, the situation, the story of his motive in taking to the road, and this tale of lifting a lady, so grotesque as to be full of humor, and humor, in spite of his hard-cut face, was Mollett's weak side.

"D'ye know the lady?" he inquired.

"I've heard of her. Miss Warrilow."

"Warrilow!" interjected Mollett. "Is she any relation to Sir Francis Warrilow at Warrilow Hall near here?"

"His daughter. This gentleman, Mr. Rokesley, he's been courting her for months. I suppose he had some idea of making the young lady think what a devil of a fellow he is. Seems a silly idea, too—not but what it might please a fanciful sort of young woman, as many females are. Though they do say she be mad enough on him as it is."

Mollett reflected. Internally he was shaking with laughter. And—the notion was dim—but when he had passed the Bath coach on the way down, had he not noted that wonderful face seen profile at the coach window, in a—What color was it? Blue? Green? Yes, green—a green hood. He could just recall it.

"How were you to know the young lady?" he asked. "There might have been more than one on the coach."

"She was to wear a green cloak and hood," said the highwayman, "and I got her young gentleman's ten guineas down, and I was to get another ten to-morrow. He'll be sold now. It would ha' been a rare bit."

"Hold your tongue and let me think," said Mollett.

He looked around. On the table was a rag of black crape, a dark lantern.

"I'm going to tie you up," he said suddenly.

"What for?"

"Hold your tongue!"

He took the dirty tablecloth off, tore it into strips, and firmly bound the highwayman caretaker's hands and feet together, using a sailor's methodical care. When the man lay trussed and helpless, he gagged him, ignoring a spirited protest.

"I want you safe, and I want you quiet. Lie still, my man, where I put you, or I'll break your neck. Don't let me see or hear anything of you till I ask for you."

He opened the bed, pushed the helpless man down onto it, covered him over with the bedclothes, bound the rag of crape over his eyes, lit the dark lantern at the candle, and left the room.

The coach from London to Bath came across the common in fine style, with four fresh and spirited horses in the traces. Amelia, dead tired, watched the vague shapes of trees in the moonlight with a thrill as she thought of the adventure that was waiting for her half an hour farther on. On the top of Dunkerley Hill, at the end of the long rise that led from Bramboro Dip, close at hand, the coach was to be stopped and—

Suddenly the coach began to fly at increased speed. The whip was plying on the horses' backs; sounds of alarm came from the outside passengers. Amelia looked out of the window. There he was, flying across the common, in a direction nearly parallel to theirs, but at greater speed—a solitary horseman, clear in the moonlight, and masked! He turned his nag's head toward the coach and came up with it hand over hand. He was alongside.

The moon shone brightly on his sinister, yet commanding figure. He held up his hand—and at that instant, Bang! went the guard's blunderbuss.

Oh, heavens! Amelia gasped at the sound and the flash, and saw with horror the horseman's very head fly to pieces. No, it was only his hat, and apparently not even his nerve was touched, for, riding along, looking up at the driver, he said in tones icily polite that yet reached Amelia:

"Mr. Driver, oblige me by stopping the coach."

And very obediently—the blunderbuss having missed him and there being no chance for the guard to reload—the driver pulled up his smoking team.

"Trouble you for the blunderbuss, my lad," said the highwayman, and the trembling guard handed it down. The highwayman tossed it into the ditch by the roadside. "You can now step back and fetch my hat, if I may trouble you," said the highwayman politely, and the guard responded by positively falling off the coach in his hurry to comply with the request.

Now the highwayman looked up at the coach and peered inside the windows. Amelia and an old lady were the only inside passengers. The highwayman saluted them, hat in hand, most gracefully.

"I wonder," he remarked, almost as to himself, "I wonder if these good ladies and gentlemen would do me the favor to step down from the coach?"

His query was settled almost as soon as it was uttered. With astonishing alacrity, the five gentlemen outside clambered into the road. So did Amelia. So did the old lady. All began to turn out their pockets. The highwayman checked them with uplifted hand.

"Gentlemen, gentlemen—I could not hear of such a thing! Desist, I beg! Now I see you all here, I am able to discharge my errand. Gentlemen, pray resume your places—quickly!"

Quick was the word—they were up again when the words were scarcely out of his mouth.

"And you, madam," to Amelia's companion.

The old lady flew into the coach without assistance.

Amelia, though she knew well that this was all part of the plan, could not help trembling a little as the masked man leaned over his horse's neck and addressed her:

"Kindly get up on the coach sill."

She obeyed. He moved his horse right up to her, leaned over, grasped her waist, and hey! she was on his horse's neck before him, with his arms resting about and across her. She pulled herself together. She had a part to act.

"Oh, heavens!" she began. "Will no one help me? Oh, help!"

"It's a damned shame!" said the guard.

"Did you speak, my friend?" asked the highwayman pleasantly.

"No, sir," answered the guard promptly.

"Frederick, oh, Frederick, save me!" continued Amelia.

She was a great deal more frightened than she had expected, and her call for help, in consequence, was very real—and very faint. And where was Frederick? Why did he not now rush out of the darkness like a lion and rescue her?

"Hush!" whispered the highwayman's voice in her ear. "You'll see Frederick if you come quietly."

She ceased crying out. To tell the truth, she was now so agitated that she could not do anything but submit. In her heart of hearts rose a deep feeling of resentment against Rokesley. She was in a highwayman's arms—it was horrible! It was real; the play, the make-believe seemed to have gone out of it. She half fainted.

"Now, are you all right, driver?"

queried the highwayman, with great civility.

"Yes, sir," said the guard respectfully.

"Then, if I were you, I should drive on."

"Thank you," answered the coachman, and did so.

The horses sprang forward, the coach swept away; it turned the road by the clump of trees; it vanished.

"Sir," said Amelia feebly, "what does this mean? Where are you taking me?"

"Hush!" said the highwayman.

"But——"

"Hush!" he said again.

In his voice was a quality she could not define, but it meant, "Obey!" She sat silent. He turned his horse, and with his arms about her, they rode across the common.

Darkness and silence. Then sound and light—light from a dark lantern, suddenly visible as a door opens; sound of the door's opening and a man's entry. The room is the library of an old Georgian mansion; large bookcases round the walls, a few pieces of heavy and stately furniture, and yet a suggestion of a common man's usage in the rude kitchen table by the fireplace, the utensils on the hearth, the frowsty-looking bed huddled in one corner.

Into this room came a man bearing a dark lantern. He wore a three-cornered hat, laced; a voluminous coat, with three capes; tight-fitting buff breeches; heavy riding boots; and—a mask!

Behind him followed a woman cloaked and hooded, a fine, if girlish, figure revealing itself beneath the sweep of her flowing Georgian draperies, her face, delicately shaped, but white and colorless, betraying a nervous tension her attitude of cold dignity sought to deny. She entered the room boldly, as having no fear. The masked man closed the door behind her. She crossed

to the table and turned to face him. He came toward her. She shrank back from his approach and threw a rapid glance round the room.

The man placed the lantern on the table, opened its door, and one by one lit three candles which stood in tall candlesticks close by. This done, he stared without a word, boldly and deliberately scrutinizing her, at the girl, who, with an effort, treated him with all the unconcern she could summon.

She broke the silence.

"Where is Mr. Rokesley?" she demanded.

In answer the masked man laid his finger on his lips, walked to the tall window by the fireplace, closed and barred the shutters, made secrecy more secret by pulling the heavy curtains there well together, returned to the table, and again, silent, stared at the girl, regarding her with unwinking scrutiny through the crape bandage over his eyes.

At his silence and his stare, a sudden flush rushed over her cheeks and gave to her face a loveliness enhancing miraculously the clear beauty of every feature. Her nostrils swelled, and in her voice as she spoke there came a trace of agitation.

"I ask, where is Mr. Rokesley? You said he would be here."

No answer, but through the crape the man's eyes stared at her unblinkingly.

"Is he here, I ask? What do you mean by not answering me?"

Still the masked man gave her no answer, the cold eyes, expressing no emotion, resting on the flushed and indignant beauty of her face. She stepped toward the door; one step of his brought him directly in her path. She stopped; the fright she had hitherto held back began to seize on her limbs. Still she made a last attempt to control the situation. She summoned all her dignities to this end.

"How dare you stop me? Stand aside! If you do not let me go——"

And on that instant all her strength ebbed, and it was a voice of helpless entreaty that almost sobbed, "Oh, do let me go!" One hand was on her heart, the other, bearing on the table, enabled her to stand still, facing him.

For the first time, the man in the mask spoke;

"All in good time, mistress. 'Tis barely ten o'clock."

With a sudden tumbling down of all her powers, she half gasped, "Oh, what will my father say?" and, her knees giving way beneath her, sank trembling into the chair by the table, fear and despair in every line of her.

The masked man surveyed her for a second or two. Then, "Rather late in the day to think of your father," he remarked. He came nearer. She felt his nearness, looked up, shuddered as she stood up and slipped toward the other end of the table.

"Oh, pray, pray take off that horrible mask!" she begged appealingly.

He looked at her consideringly. Then: "I'll take off my mask if you'll take off your hood," he returned.

Again the hot flush sprang to her cheeks.

"How dare you?" she cried.

"Well, well," said the masked man, "service for service. I don't wear this mask for nothing, young madam."

"Ah," she cried, "I know! You think that if I saw, I might swear to your face one day. But I promise on my honor never to do or say anything to your injury. But your mask frightens me. Mr. Highwayman—oh, sir, let me go, I beg you! Oh, why did I ever come here?"

"Ah, why?" came the impassive rejoinder. "Why do young ladies let themselves do foolish things they must afterward repent?"

In his tone was a hint of a sneer, but no trace of pity. Her despair, her agitation, deepened.

"What do you want of me?" she

asked. "Money? Here, take all I have. Here's my purse"—she offered it to him—"and my necklace—and my rings—here they are. Only leave me this—this one," she appealed, touching one most precious circle on her wedding finger.

As she spoke, she had untied the neck ribbon of her hood, which fell back from her head and face, and, opening her cloak, had raised over her head the gold necklace she wore. From her fingers, she had stripped her rings, and now, with these and her purse heaped in her hands, she stood extending them toward him. Her lips were parted; her hair, thick, dark brown, disordered by the sudden pulling back of her hood—this and her cloak had slipped to the floor—lay in curls down her cheek and rested on her shoulders; the low-cut neck of her dress showed her white breast heaving rapidly.

With a touch of unfeeling banter, he stepped toward her.

"Leave you that one? Mr. Rokesley's gift, eh? Well, let us look."

He took the hands she held out to him in both his, looked the rings over, then lifted his bold stare to her face again.

"Very pretty—'pon my word!" She strove to release her hands, but he held them tight and compelled her to endure his scrutiny, impudent, unsparing. "Yes, your Mr. Rokesley has taste—in rings—as well. And is this the precious ring we cannot part with? Very well; you shall keep it. And are all these for me?" He swept into his pocket the pile of treasure she had offered him. "You're very kind—so kind that I will take off my mask."

He unbound the crape from his eyes and, stooping in confusion to recover her cloak, she could not forbear watching him curiously as he did so. With the withdrawal of the mask, the terror of his aspect lessened, the lips, the nose, the chin lost their forbidding harshness.

His face was that of a man of thirty, angular and hard cut, it is true, but not that of a desperado. There was even something in it that she felt she could make appeal to.

"Sir," she said, "be kinder still and tell me what all this means. Mr. Highwayman, think of the agony of poor Mr. Rokesley, the most sensitive soul alive, when he finds his Amelia vanished from the coach!"

Had she moved him? He regarded her appraisingly. Then, "Amelia," he said reflectively. "So you're Amelia! And a remarkably pretty young lady you are, Amelia."

In such a situation as hers, such a compliment might well terrify her. Quick as a flash, she evolved and tried a device to fool him. A sudden light of pleased surprise flashed into her eyes as she looked eagerly over his shoulder.

"Oh, Frederick," she cried, "you've come!"

Startled, the highwayman turned to view the silent newcomer—the non-existent newcomer—and in that instant Amelia turned and was off! Like a flash she sped to the opposite door, grasped the handle—Good God! It was locked! Desperate, she dashed to a second door, up close by the bed. Useless—that was locked, too! She turned. He was coming toward her, openly laughing at her wild effort to escape. She leaped past him, rounded the table, flew to the door they had entered by—No, he was there first, had turned the key. She snatched at his hand—he evaded her; she caught his arm—he held it over his head and, laughing, walked to the table, slipping the key into his pocket as he did so.

"I will go!" she cried, loudly now, her growing terror demanding some outlet. "Let me go! I'll scream—I'll scream!"

In another second she would have given way, have screamed, have given shriek on shriek in uncontrollable and

hysterical fright, but his voice, raised, swift, commanding, broke on her and seemed to compel her into self-mastery.

"Be silent!"

There was a terrible note of power in his tones that brought her to instant obedience. How terribly, how irresistibly, his words leaped at her! She felt like a child. Men, she understood, would leap to do the bidding of such a man, speaking like this. Trembling, she prayed to herself that he might not speak to her again in that voice—and yet she thrilled at the memory of that "Be silent!"

"Don't be silly," he went on, lowering his voice again. "You know the house is empty, and 'tis near half a mile to the road. Scream away, my fine young woman, and entertain the bats."

It was true. She was helpless. This great house had been shut up for years, with but a caretaker. Caretaker? Perhaps he— No, there could be no hope of help there. The hope died down in her breast as quickly as it had flashed there. A glance at those eyes, those lips, that jaw, the masterful poise of the man, told her that such an intervention as that of the caretaker had doubtless been foreseen and dealt with. Dealt with? How? She shuddered. The full sense of her utter helplessness now came over her like a flood.

"Oh!" she cried weakly, and wrung her hands, "why have you betrayed us? Mr. Rokesley would have been generous had you but done as we desired!"

She was by now so overwhelmed by her terrors that she scarcely noted the blank astonishment, the attitude of sheer amazement and bewilderment, that now distinguished her captor.

"As 'we' desired! Who—who desired? Not—not you and Mr. Rokesley?"

"Yes," she panted. "And was it so hard for such a man as you—I mean, a man—a man—used to—to—to doing things—like that? You were to have

stopped the coach, taken me out, and prepared to carry me away. Then Mr. Rokesley was to have ridden up, there was to have been a scuffle and some shooting in the dark—nothing dangerous, of course—then Mr. Rokesley was to tear me away from you and you were to have ridden away——"

"So you knew all about it beforehand!" broke in the highwayman, his voice for the first time betraying something of uncertainty. To tell the truth, he had been so staggered by this offhand revelation that the young lady knew all about her own intended abduction that it was difficult at the moment to speak at all. "This beats me! Pardon me a moment. I can understand Mr. Rokesley's endeavoring in this fashion to convince you of his courage, but—how in Heaven's name did he expect to do so if he let you into the secret beforehand?"

"Convince me?" she rejoined earnestly. "Convince me? Nay, sir, I assure you that was never necessary!"

Such an air of pride, such a ring of confidence came into her aspect and voice as she spoke that the highwayman, watching her, missing no trifle of look or tone or attitude, felt a glow of admiration run through him.

"Staunch, staunch!" he said to himself. "Whatever her Rokesley may be, she believes in him."

"I see I must tell you all," she went on. "Mr. Rokesley is my lover, my pledged husband. But my father is prejudiced against him. There are idle tales afloat concerning Mr. Rokesley's courage. My father gives them credence, but they are false. I know it—I feel it. When a woman loves a man, can she not read his very heart?" she appealed.

"Faith, madam," answered the highwayman, "in that case, in all fairness, we men ought to receive warning."

"You jest," she answered, unflinching. "But— Ah, never mind. My

Rokesley would die for me. He has sworn it a thousand times. My heart would cry out to me if he were false."

Something like a chuckle escaped the highwayman.

"Yet," she continued, "we had to convince my father, and so Mr. Rokesley hit on this plan."

"Madame," said the highwayman, "the respect I previously had for this Mr. Rokesley increases momentarily. What courage, what invention, what ingenuity——"

She was delighted.

"And he is an artist, sir," she broke in eagerly, "and a poet, and a divine singer—of songs which he not only writes, but sets to music of his own composition!"

"I should love to hear him. I salute his genius. Yet," went on the highwayman musingly, "certainly I venture to observe that here the gentleman's ingenuity had almost run away with him. To a common man like myself, it would appear almost better to submit to a false imputation of cowardice rather than seek to disprove it by a scheme in which, at the very outset, one's sweetheart has to be handled by a common footpad and——"

She interrupted.

"Sir, you do yourself a wrong."

"A common footpad," he repeated vehemently, "as low-down a rogue, as dirty a cutpurse, as ever you set eyes on. I say that, for my part, I would let the world think me a coward rather than put the woman I loved in such a position. Well, we'll accept the ingenious Rokesley as a man of intrepid courage. What did he fear of the risk of having his brains blown out by the coachman's blunderbuss when he rode up in the dark?"

"Ah!"

"Calm yourself. He did not come—and the blunderbuss would have been empty. The guard had already had a go at me."

"I remember. Even in my agitation, I heard the bang."

He pulled a wry face.

"Jove, mistress, there was a bang!"

He picked his hat off the table, poked his fingers through a number of ragged holes in the crown, and twiddled them.

Amelia trembled. He had been within an ace of death—on her account. He was a common highwayman, sure to be hanged some day, and doubtless justly so, but a thrill of horror came over her as she saw him twiddling the shattered hat on his fingers, his eyes gleaming as at some capital joke.

"Horrible!" she gasped. "Believe me, sir, I never thought of that!"

"Shall I tell you something?" he said suddenly, so confidentially that she could not prevent herself from adopting the same tone, as of a friend sharing a great secret.

"Yes?" she queried breathlessly.

"Neither did I," he said, his eyes dancing. "I give you my word of honor I never gave a thought to being shot at, and when it came, I was so startled that I nearly fell off my horse!"

She stared at him in bewilderment, and he burst into a laugh—like some schoolboy rejoicing in a lucky escape from detention. Clearly he had no idea of the enormity of his mode of living.

"But how came this plan to miscarry?" she asked him.

"All my fault," he confessed. "The business was to have been done at the top of Dunkerley Hill, but owing to my stopping the coach in Bramboro Dip, half an hour earlier——"

"I see. Oh, why did I come here?"

"Ah, why, indeed?"

"You said that I was to come and that Mr. Rokesley would meet me."

"God forgive me—sheer lying to a pretty woman! A thing no man ever did till now."

He was laughing at her openly. Terror seized her anew.

"Then what?"—she trembled—"what

do you want? It must be money. Men of your stamp——"

"I beg your pardon? Men of my stamp?"

"I am so sorry. I mean—— But surely you rob for money? I offer to send you more if you demand more than I have already given you."

"Madam," said the highwayman coldly, "I object to this purely mercenary view of my enterprise. My ideas are somewhat above that level."

"Then what, in Heaven's name, do you want of me?"

He did not answer, and now the wordless terror that all the time had lain at the back of her thoughts began to assume a dreadful shape.

"You wouldn't—you dare not——" She retreated toward the door, still facing him, white, quivering, desperate. "Don't you come near me! I'll kill you if you come near me!" She was in a fury, ready for every madness of defense.

He surveyed her coolly from the table, on the edge of which he was seated.

"Admirably done! In every respect up to the best traditions of your sex. But now let us cease wasting time and—proceed to the inevitable." He got up from the table.

"Inevitable!" she panted hoarsely. "Never! I'll die first!"

"Come, come, it isn't so terrible as all that."

"Not so terrible! What in Heaven's name do you take me for?"

He looked at her with an air of shocked surprise.

"We are evidently at cross purposes," he remarked with an air of cold reproof. "I will not ask you to explain yourself. I wish you to understand that by 'the inevitable' I allude merely to the inevitable disillusionment with regard to Mr. Rokesley."

"What disillusionment?"

"You think him a man of courage?"

"He is!" All her pride in her lover rang in the clear confidence of her voice. The highwayman shook his head, half regretfully. "He is!" she repeated. "You don't know my Rokesley." She stepped toward him, holding out her hands in an involuntary half appeal. She did not know the loveliness she embodied.

"Gods, isn't she fine!" thought the highwayman.

"Listen to me," he said. "Your Rokesley's a coward, an ingenious coward. Your father knew it—I know it." She was silent, speechless with indignation. She could have struck the man. "A rat, madam, a rat, if ever there was one!"

"I disdain to answer you!" she stabbed back at him. "'Tis not for me to answer, but if Mr. Rokesley were here——"

A most surprising thing happened.

"Oh, he'll be here," said the highwayman casually.

"Here!" She was bewildered. "Here? When? How do you know?"

"Young lady, your lover has by now met the coach and learned that his sweetheart's been carried off by a highwayman. He knows who—he knows his haunt. Why, stab my vitals, I say he's a coward, but even he must be man enough to come and see what's happened to her!"

The tone of unbounded contempt roused Amelia again.

"You are right," she said. "My Rokesley will seek me here."

He laughed banteringly. Her immense dignity was quite thrown away on him.

"I said so, young lady. I said so myself. And now—— Lord, here's a plan! What say you if we settle this little dispute between us?" She stared at him. "Come, now, you say he's a man of courage—I say he isn't. He swears he'll fight for you—he shall. He shall fight me for you."

Like a flash she took up the challenge for Rokesley.

"Aye," she said, "and he'll kill you—kill you! You dare to treat me, to speak of him, as you have done—vile slanderer!"

"Manners, manners!" he jeered. What an odious laugh he had! "Hark! What's that?"

He stood still a moment, then ran to the shuttered window, pulled the curtains aside, and peered through the crack between the shutters. Amelia caught the sound of a horse's hoofs outside. The highwayman looked back at her, laughing.

"Here's your hero. I'll let him in, and do you hide. You want to see this fight, eh?"

He crossed toward the door. Amelia stepped disdainfully aside to let him pass.

"I want to see my Rokesley kill you!" she snapped viciously, and indeed she was so angered that at the moment she felt in the mood to witness such a spectacle.

He laughed again, openly jeering.

"I'll take a better man than your Rokesley." He took the key from his breeches pocket, opened the door, waited a moment to say, "Hide, my fine lady, and listen, and watch," and then was gone.

Amelia looked around. Where should she hide? She might have waited boldly there, ready to fly at once into Rokesley's arms when he appeared, but she knew that practically she had accepted on her lover's behalf a challenge as to the manhood he would show, and that her absence from the scene during the test was implicit in the bargain. Where should she hide? Behind the curtains? Under the bed? No, behind the bed—ample room there. She stepped toward it—and with a gasp and a leap of the heart that was painful to bear, she stood suddenly still, for the bedclothes suddenly moved and a man sat bolt upright

on his haunches in the bed—a man gagged and bound, who made inarticulate noises with his mouth, and by the wriggling of his body and the motion of his head imperatively demanded release.

For a moment she was too startled, too giddy and faint with the shock of his sudden appearance, to do anything except stare; then, following her first instinctive idea that a man so bound in this place must be a victim like herself of the highwayman's villainy, she ran to the bed, stooped over the man, and endeavored to unbind his hands and arms, tied firmly behind his back. He wagged his head, and she understood that the gag was to claim her attention first. She busied herself with this, and finding the knots behind his head too stiff and cunningly tied for her trembling fingers to undo, she managed to pull the bandage down over his ears onto his neck, and was thus able to slip out of his mouth the pad of torn rag that had kept him dumb.

"Aw—awh—huh!" sputtered the man. "Aw—that's better!" She tried again to loosen the bonds of his hands. He struck in. "Can't you manage?" She made a further effort. "Never mind. Don't waste time. We must be quick. You must save us both."

"Who are you?" demanded Amelia.

"I'm a Bow Street runner. I tackled him by myself, but he was too quick for me. He's not a man—he's a devil incarnate. Now, hurry! We haven't got a second. Go to that bureau." He indicated with his head the bureau across the room. Amelia ran across. "Open the third drawer down." She did so. "Take out the two pistols—Careful! They're loaded." She picked the weapons up and came speeding back to him. "No; wait there!" She stopped. "Go to the door, stand behind it, and as he comes in, blow his brains out!"

She let her hands fall. She panted: "Good God! That's murder! I can't

"—I can't do murder!" She hesitated, put the pistols down on the table—

"Don't be a fool, young woman! You don't know what's waiting for you. Don't be squeamish—do it—quick! Hark! Here he comes!"

She stood undecided for a second, her eyes wandering to the door. She could hear heavy footsteps coming down the passage. She dashed to the bed, pushed the man down again on his back.

"Listen!" she panted. "Don't be afraid! My lover is coming—the bravest man in the world! He'll save you, save us both! Lie still!"

She flung the bedclothes over him, and as the door handle turned, dashed behind the window curtains.

The door opened; the highwayman entered, glancing around first and catching sight of the falling together of the heavy curtains behind Amelia. He turned, beckoned abruptly with his head, and there entered Rokesley. Dressed like the highwayman in breeches, boots, three-cornered hat, and riding coat, he walked hurriedly across to the center of the room and there turned, as the highwayman, shutting the door, followed him to the table.

Peeping out between the curtains, Amelia could see them both plainly. The highwayman was cool, impudently cool, his face sneeringly smiling, his manner easy, confident, challenging. Rokesley was agitated, anxious, ill at ease.

"Well he might be," thought Amelia, and yet wished that his look were calmer, his voice more steady, as he addressed the highwayman.

"A pretty mess you've made of things!" he ejaculated. Then, as he caught sight of the highwayman's face, "Why—you're not the man I made the arrangement with, are you?"

"No. He's been detained, so I did the job."

"I'm damned!" said Rokesley. "These fellows pass on commissions

like professional men! Well, I don't want to stop here longer than I can help. Where's Miss Warrilow?"

The highwayman surveyed him calmly.

"What's your hurry?" he asked mildly.

"Damn you!" Rokesley exploded. "Stop asking your fool's questions! I want to be out of this house! I wish to God I'd never started on this infernal business!" He took his hat off, felt in the side pocket of his coat for his handkerchief, drew it out, dropped it, stooped and picked it up, dropped his hat, picked that up and dropped the handkerchief, gave it up and wiped his forehead with his hand. "I might have guessed things would go wrong! And when a plan like this breaks down, who knows what mischief starts? I say again, where's Miss Warrilow?"

The highwayman sat down on the edge of the table again and answered him with great composure.

"The young lady? Oh, don't trouble your head about her."

"But I must, man!" burst in Rokesley. "Don't trouble, indeed! Why, there will be all sorts of inquiries! Do you imagine a young lady in her position can be spirited away without all sorts of badgering questions? Look here—there'll be a hue and cry about this even if she gets back safe and tries to stop the fuss as far as she can. If it comes home to you, you won't betray me?"

"Oh, shan't I?" came the callous answer. "And why not?"

Rokesley stamped.

"I might have known it! Fool that I was ever to put myself in this position! My man, understand me, I'm not going to be blackmailed, but if ever you get laid by the heels and they try to drag me into this, stick to it that I had nothing to do with it and I'll make it worth your while."

"Don't worry yourself, my pretty

gentleman." Oh, why didn't Rokesley say, do something to put a stop to the fellow's offensive tone of—of—superiority, thought the girl behind the curtain. "I'll make all my arrangements with you as it suits me. But now never mind about the precious Mr. Rokesley." He tapped her lover familiarly on the breast with the back of his hand. "The matter now is Mr. Rokesley's pretty lass."

Rokesley rallied.

"Yes, curse you! Bring her here and let me get away!"

There was a slight pause before the answer came—came like a stab in the breast to Amelia, listening and watching behind the curtains.

"You can get away now, my buck."

The blood beat in her temples. There was no mistaking the meaning in his tones.

Rokesley started back.

"But the lady—I can't leave her here! What— You scoundrel! Would you detain her?" The two men were facing one another. "Gad, you devil! But the thing's impossible! A brilliant young lady, of high birth—"

The highwayman jeered.

"And a pretty bit of goods, too. Damme, Rokesley, don't look like that!"

Rokesley put both hands to his forehead, vainly endeavoring to collect himself.

"Rokesley," went on the derisive voice, "I don't think you're much of a man, but you're a judge of women. A rare bit, this lass of yours, and devilish spirited."

Rokesley groaned.

"Look here, I'll find money for you. With that in your pocket, you won't want for lady friends."

"Keep your money," came the off-hand answer. "I'm tired of barmaids."

Rokesley stamped toward him, panting, distracted.

"You'll drive me mad! The girl will never accept you!"

A laugh.

"I'll see to that. What's a few tears? Better fun, so I've heard."

Amelia grew cold. What a horror was here! Rokesley, his face drawn, his lips white, was speaking.

"By God, you shan't do it!" He clapped his hand to his sword hilt. "I'll—I'll——"

The highwayman leaped from his seat on the table.

"Bravo, Rokesley! Aha, have I wronged you?" His voice was hearty, eager, friendly.

"——I'll have all the neighborhood down on you," came the finish of Rokesley's effort.

A moment's pause. Then:

"You disappoint me. I thought you were going to fight."

Rokesley could still raise a protest.

"I'll have her out of here within two hours."

"Two hours!" The voice was full of vitriolic scorn. "My God, here's a hawk! Two hours! You'll give me two hours, here alone in this house—that girl—with a highwayman! You lousy tyke!"

"I don't fear your foul abuse!"

"Oh, you'll face that! You dog! Good God! Rouse the neighborhood, will he? Here's manhood! Pshaw, Rokesley, I guessed your measure true, and yet I hoped, on my word, I was wrong, just to spare that girl the shame you've brought on her."

"You talk of sparing her shame after what you've threatened!"

"Then why the devil don't you cut my throat?" The highwayman roared the words like a man at the pitch of exasperation. "Damn the fellow! Will nothing rouse him! What's that thing at your side for? Why do you wear it? Would the sight of your sweetheart put some stuff in you?"

"Yes!" came the voice of Amelia. Pale as death, trembling in every limb, she had parted the curtains, and now

stepped between the two men. She put her hand on Rokesley's arm and, standing thus, she faced the highwayman. "Yes, he will fight! Frederick, you will fight? He is agitated, and you brow-beat him, but now I am here— My Rokesley, draw and kill this wretch!"

She was fine, flaming, passionate—her words, her look, might have inspired a dead man—but her lover could only equivocate.

"My darling, I cannot involve you in such a degrading scene."

"Better that than the degradation he threatens. Fight him, Frederick!"

"My dearest——"

"Draw on him!"

The highwayman, standing warily three paces away, hand on sword hilt, watched them both under lowering brows, but through smiling eyes. He mocked her.

"Draw on me, Rokesley! Run me through, Rokesley! Slit my liver, Rokesley! Artist, aren't you?" he suddenly asked, with such an air of friendly interest that Rokesley could not forbear answering, "Yes."

"An artist—and can't draw a sword!" The gibe was so cheap, so flippant, that Amelia felt herself writhe at the thought that this should be flung at her lover. "Poet, too, aren't you?" No answer this time. "And yet he's dumb! Pah, what a rat!"

Rokesley turned away in impotent rage and misery. He could not stand the scorching blaze of the girl's eyes on him.

"Let me alone! My God, what a situation to grow out of a harmless strategem!"

His voice died away—he was just short of tears. Amelia stood like a woman turned to stone. The highwayman did no more than watch her. A tense silence fell on the room.

With a shudder, Amelia forced herself to face her situation.

"What of me?" she asked simply, of Rokesley. "What are you going to do?"

He hung his head.

"I've told him. I've made my threat perfectly plain."

"Threat!" There was not even scorn in her voice, but its calm made him writhe.

"Or, on the other hand, I'm willing to pay him handsomely."

"My God!" She turned away.

"The inevitable disillusionment," the highwayman had said. She had not dreamed it possible.

Almost as in pity of her, the highwayman struck in:

"Pay? Well, after all, perhaps that's the best. Nothing I can do seems to take your fancy, young lady. Sure you don't like me?"

"I loathe you!"

"Well, well! Let it be money, then, if it can't be love." He sighed profoundly. "Come along, then, Rokesley. What's the lady worth?"

Rokesley took up the bargaining at once.

"I've no more on me than this twenty guineas, but here's my watch as well—and if, say, another twenty guineas would——"

"What?" The highwayman's voice expressed immeasurable contempt. "For a silk-and-satin bit of goods like this?"

Before she knew where she was, Amelia's hand was taken, she was led out a pace or two, and displayed, as it were, like some article of commerce. She flushed. If she had had a knife, she would have stabbed him!

Rokesley advanced his offer.

"Say another forty. Then—make it fifty——"

"I'll keep the girl."

"Make it seventy—eighty——"

"Stop this!" Amelia wrenched her hand free, started away, stamped, almost shrieked. This chaffering, over

her! "Stop it, I say! Good God, am I to be auctioned!"

She was fury itself as she glared, first at the highwayman, then at Rokesley. She was the spirit incarnate of womanhood roused in its own desperate defense.

"I have it!" she screamed, and in a flash Rokesley's sword was in her hand. She had stepped swiftly up to her wretched lover and had whipped his rapier out of the scabbard.

She faced the highwayman now with breast heaving, eyes flashing, nostrils swelling, muscles strung up, ablaze with wrath, defiance, hate.

"Now, ruffian, touch me if you dare! You shan't handle me! I'll kill you—I'll kill you—or I'll kill myself! Rokesley, leave this house! I'll trust you at least to go for help, and I'll shift for myself. I'm not afraid of him—the coward! Cowards both!"

"Not yet!" came from the highwayman. His sword flashed out in turn, and he covered the door of exit. "No, he doesn't! He's threatened a lot too much. He dies now—dies like a man or like a cow in a shed, but die he shall!"

Rokesley, tottering, breathing fast, put his hands feebly to his head.

"Oh, God! If I must—" Suddenly strength and desperation seemed to come to him. "All right, then!" he panted. "Amelia, give me the sword!"

He took off his hat, his heavy outside coat; the highwayman quickly did the same. Amelia thrust the rapier into Rokesley's hand, and the two men stood up to each other by the light of the flickering candles. Their blades scraped and chattered as they took the distance. But Amelia's new-born hope that now at last her lover would redeem himself passed as swiftly as it had come.

The highwayman leaped in and stabbed; Rokesley put the blade aside and gave ground. The other was on him like a tiger; and again Rokesley,

with incredible swiftness—the swiftness of fear—evaded him and stepped aside. As the highwayman turned to run in again, Rokesley, nimbly backing, maneuvered the table between them. The highwayman, thrusting around it, overreached, slipped, staggered forward, recovered. Rokesley, who might have caught him then, hesitated, blenched, and as the highwayman came relentlessly on again, the wretched man dropped his blade, ran to the wall, again nimbly evaded a thrust, dashed across to Amelia, and, throwing himself on his knees behind her, clung to her skirts, crying:

"Stop him! Stop him! Save me, Amelia—for Heaven's sake!"

Sick with revulsion, the fear of death in her heart, Amelia faced the highwayman's sword.

"Stop, stop!" she breathed faintly. "Keep away! You must not! You shall not! Do no murder!"

The terrible sword point was at her bosom, yet she saw the hand that held it stay, saw the sword point drop, saw him laugh, with something other than a laugh in his eyes as he stared at her.

"And what of me if he gets away?"

She roused for one last effort.

"You! You are a felon, a ruffianly criminal, and I defy you!" She pounced on Rokesley's sword, lying at her feet. "Now, you shall see! I won't run away!"

She leaped at him. Of fencing she knew a little. Many women of her rank at that time possessed some elementary idea of how a rapier should be handled. She felt the blades in contact, beat his aside, and thrust. Missed! His blade had touched hers and the thrust had missed. Again, beat and thrust. Another miss! Again, swiftly. Her fury and despair gave her strength and speed. But again the little tap of his blade on hers at the last moment put her point harmlessly aside. She lunged for his right hip—missed again, and in

the effort went nearly off her balance. As she recovered, she was hopelessly undefended, but the highwayman merely stepped back a little farther—at every thrust he had given ground—and in a second she was at the attack again.

She pressed him round the room, round the table. Oh, why, why could she not get the point home once! Her strength was going, her limbs trembling; she paused, almost choking for breath, lowered her point, standing with her hand on her heart—and in a flash the brute was at her! She stepped back, parried, parried again, made a last effort to step back, and in that second the blades locked. Wrench! The rapier flew from her hand. He had attacked and disarmed her.

For a second she yielded, was beaten. Then her eye, questing wildly around for some new defense, lit on the pistols on the table, the pistols she had taken from the bureau and refused to use. She sprang for them. Startled, but ready, he leaped there first. His right hand, clutching the sword, pressed against her bosom, his left swept the pistols out of her reach. She stepped back, a wild cat, still unbeaten, a primitive thing, ready for him with fingers, aye, and teeth.

He was panting, too. She had pressed him hard.

"By God, missy," he said, drawing his breath and looking from her to the pistols, "I don't know where these came from, but you're a fighter! I do like you!"

Her mass of dark-brown hair was down. Even at that moment she felt that she looked like a wild woman, and, obedient to an instinct as deeply rooted as that of self-defense, she whipped it up in her hands and strove to pile it into something like order.

"Why not leave it down?" suggested the highwayman.

She stamped.

"I wish I could kill you!"

"Kill!" said the highwayman, coldly businesslike. "That reminds me Rokesley——"

"Ah, no! 'Tis impossible!" Amelia was by Rokesley's side again, where he still crouched on his knees. "Rokesley, be a man! Fight again!"

"Alas, Amelia!" It was all Rokesley was capable of.

"Coward!"

She struck him with her hand across the face. It was Rokesley's epitaph. She turned to the highwayman.

"You shall not do it! I'll have no murder! I will resist you if I have but my bare hands!"

The highwayman suddenly accepted the situation. He shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, a finish to this unpleasantness. After all, I don't want to be unfriendly to the gentleman. Have your own way—buy him." She stared at him, speechless. "Buy him," he went on. "What's he worth? He valued your honor round about a hundred guineas, but I shall want more than that."

"How much will you want?" she asked.

"Well, now, what do you say to—a kiss?" She flushed. That was something she had not dreamed of. "Come now, lady. Your lover, your pledged husband, a poet, an artist, a divine singer——"

His mockery was unbearable.

"Oh, don't!" she pleaded faintly. "Don't shame me!"

"The whole catalogue," he went on mercilessly. "This incomparable gentleman, as he stands—stands!—with all faults—if any—for a kiss. Win him and wear him, lady."

She clasped her hands and her head drooped.

"I've been a fool! I'm a miserable woman! I can never hold up my head again! Kiss a highwayman! Oh, but—I can't see him die! Sir, if you insist——"

She came slowly toward him, loathing him, herself, Rokesley, all her life, all the world. She lifted her face to him, turning her head sideways that he might meet her pale cheek.

He threw his sword on the table.

"Your lips, mistress."

She had hoped—fool to think it!—that he might spare her that. She shuddered and turned her face toward him, letting her head droop, closing her eyes. He placed his hands beneath her chin, turned her face upward, stooped over her—she shrank from the sense of his nearness—and then she felt the fingers of his left hand laid lightly on her lips; he kissed his own fingers, stepped back bowing, smiling.

She panted; a great rush of warm blood flowed through all her veins.

"That was generous," she said.

Still he did not speak, and something in his attitude, in the quizzical glance of his smiling eyes, suddenly drew her into passionately grateful speech. She made an impulsive step toward him.

"Sir, I plead with you—not for my own sake. I don't fear you now. I feel that there is that in you that would not let you harm a defenseless woman, whatever you might threaten. But let me beg you to leave this place, to give up this dreadful life! On my soul, I cannot believe a man as gallant as you can be the ruffian the life of a highwayman demands. I promise to help you. My father, too, will help. He has great influence. Let Mr. Rokesley go! Let me, too, leave unharmed. And that poor man in the bed——"

"Aha!" He was staggered at that. "So you know about him, do you? Jonas, show yourself!"

The bedclothes heaved, and the bound man sat suddenly up.

"So, you've got the gag out? That explains the pistols, then."

"About time, too," came the sullen answer. "I was nearly choked."

"May he go?" asked Amelia.

"No."

"May I beg——" she began, with a woman's quick sense of dawning influence over the man she was addressing.

"No!" There was no playing with that negative.

"May I go?" asked Amelia meekly.

"Yes."

"And may Mr. Rokesley?"

"Yes. Fearless Frederick may make his exit."

Amelia winced. Rokesley got up, began in a shamefaced way to pick up his coat and hat.

"Thank you, Amelia," he said gratefully. "And you, too, sir. Amelia, I will see you home."

But now the strain of this last terrible hour told suddenly on the girl. A mist came over her eyes; her limbs gave way; she sank into the chair by the table, put her arms before her, and almost cried.

"You shall go no step of the way with me!" she said. "I'll face the dark by myself, rather!"

The highwayman was bending over her, his proximity somehow converted by some magic from impertinence to courteousness.

"Rest a while," he advised. "Don't be afraid. I'll see you home."

Absurd!

"No," protested Amelia faintly.

"Yes, yes. And drink a glass of wine."

"No, no! Please let me alone."

He let her alone, and Rokesley asked for his dismissal.

"If you're not coming, Amelia——"

"Of course she's not coming yet," broke in the highwayman's confident voice. "The lady don't want your company, Frederick, and there's no wine for you. Better go. What about Jolly Jonas in the corner, that went to bed like a good boy? Like a drink, young Bright and Early?"

"God knows I'm dry," came the assenting answer.

"Then we'll have one together, Jonas."

He stepped toward the fireplace, where on the mantelpiece two or three unopened bottles seemed to promise refreshment.

Amelia, her face still buried in her arms, strove to recall her self-possession. A movement near her made her look up suddenly. Rokesley, ignored, dismissed in contempt, had been making his way to the door when the highwayman had turned his back, and at that instant Rokesley's eye had fallen on the two pistols. In that tremendous moment, his panting soul, with a frantic effort, threw off its natural timidity and roused to action. The pistols—there they were—two! The highwayman's back was turned. Should he? Dared he? He dared!

He tiptoed to the table, leaned over, picked the pistols up, one in each hand, and aimed carefully at the unconscious back. At that second, Amelia looked up, saw his pose. Her eye flew along the line of the pistol's fire. She started up.

"Mind! Mind!" she called loudly.

The highwayman turned, dodged swiftly. Amelia dashed at Rokesley, hand uplifted. Rokesley pulled the trigger; the highwayman dropped to his knees. Amelia caught Rokesley a slash across the face with her open hand, turned, sprang at the highwayman's sword that still lay on the table, grasped it, and whipped round again. Rokesley was as quick as she. He was already opening the door in a frantic hurry. On his swift way there, he had dropped his outer coat, his hat, his wig, his sword, the other pistol. He tore the door open, and as Amelia lunged at him, his palpitating coat tails flew into the darkness of the outer passage. Did she touch him? No matter.

The highwayman had half purposely, in his dodge for safety, dropped to the floor, and was up again, coming down

to the table, holding his right hand and stamping with pain.

"Damn!" he shouted after Rokesley. "You worm!"

Amelia flew to meet him.

"Are you hurt?"

"Nothing, nothing. Damn the fellow! Why didn't you let me cut his throat?"

He relaxed his grasp to look at his wound. Amelia peeped, too. The bullet had torn across the palm of his hand, raking up the flesh in a messy tear, but missing both tendon and bone. It was a nasty sight, however. The highwayman looked at Amelia rather helplessly. She warmed to him.

"Wait," she said. "Let me—" She whipped up her flowing gown, seized the hem of her white petticoat, and tore off a long strip. "Let me bind it."

He sat down on the edge of the table, held out his hand, and she began to wind the bandage round it. His gaze, still bold and unsparing, never left her face. She avoided it, keeping her eyes on his hand. He encouraged, accepted, and directed her help.

"You are an angel," he remarked. This, of course, she ignored. "Over the thumb—that's it. Now round the wrist."

She obeyed, keeping an impassive face. He ceased keeping his arm stiffly extended—let it droop, in fact. This brought his hand closer to his own breast, and she was compelled to follow it.

"I tell you what," he half whispered to her, in that style of boyish, confidential communion he had once or twice adopted. "I shall never part with this piece of petticoat. And another thing. When I get up to London, I'm going to send you down the finest petticoat money can buy. Will you wear it?"

He put the question so eagerly that she blushed.

"Certainly not," she answered, in her coldest and most dignified manner—and

suddenly melted. "Oh, why are you a highwayman?"

She had finished the bandaging, tied the last knot, and, relinquishing his hand, stood a step away, her hands clasped in front of her. She heard his answer, but for a second or two she could not feel sure that she heard aright. For the highwayman, looking at his bandaged hand with the air of casual coolness that he chose at times to adopt, made the astonishing answer:

"A highwayman? I'm not a highwayman."

She managed to speak.

"Not a highwayman? Then what—what—" She could say no more.

"I noticed," he continued, "that both you and Mr. Rokesley seemed to be under that impression. In fact, I fancy you yourself once or twice directly applied the term to me. But I'm not. As a matter of fact, I'm a captain in his majesty's navy—name, Mollett, John Mollett, at your service."

He stood up. Amelia slid promptly into the chair by the table.

"But—but—you shot at the coachman."

"I think not. Don't you recollect he shot at me?"

"But you made him stop the coach."

"I asked him to stop the coach."

"But you made all the passengers get out."

"I asked them all to get out."

"But you made me come with you."

"I asked you to come with me."

"But you took my money, and all my rings—"

"All?"

She looked down at her hand. She blushed. On her left hand glittered the ring—Rokesley's precious gift—she had begged for. She took it off, tossed it away.

"And besides, if you recollect, I didn't even ask you for them. You gave them to me. If you want them back, will you

kindly put your hand into my right-hand coat pocket?"

Amelia shook her poor head feebly.

"I don't understand," she gasped.

"Please explain."

He seated himself on the table again, looking down at her.

"It's quite simple. This place belongs to my aunt, Lady Powderley. She's kept it shut up for years. I was home in London on leave, and there was a rumor of a highwayman making his haunt in the park here, so I was sent down to-day to see about it. I got here early to-night and I caught the highwayman—and there he is."

He pointed to the rueful object in the bed.

"Good heavens!" said Amelia. "He said he was a Bow Street runner!"

"Ha, ha ha! He's the caretaker here. He's not without his humorous points. He told me of this precious arrangement with our friend Rokesley, and for the life of me I couldn't resist seeing the thing through."

"Why?" she faltered.

"I wanted to see what the girl was like."

Amelia dared herself—and lost. She said it.

"And—and what was she like?"

She found his face near hers, his left hand holding hers. He spoke in a low voice, every tone of which went thrilling through her.

"She's the kind of woman a sailor dreams of. Hers is the face that shines among the stars in the night watch. It's eyes like yours—"

"Haw-haw-haw!" interrupted a hoarse laugh from the bed.

A month later, Rokesley, drawn by an overmastering curiosity, was waiting at the lych-gate of the old church not far from Warrilow Hall. He had seen them go in from a distance, and the wretched man could not deny himself

the torture of seeing them emerge. The crowd around the church door grew agitated, parted; a few humbler witnesses of the ceremony going on inside began to slip out and line up; in another second he could see them, feast his misery for a second on the sight, and then discreetly vanish, when——

A heavy panting at his elbow, and there—yes, there, extending a skinny hand to clutch at his coat—was granny! And ten yards away, rapidly approaching, was Fanny! And in her arms, bawling unpleasantly—— Good God! He could not face it! He would run. But where? Into the churchyard? Already, without looking up, he knew that

they were coming down the paved walk. A moment's fatal hesitation, and then those grisly fingers clutched him securely.

"Arrah, thin, ye blackguard! Fanny, me darling——"

"Frederick, 'tis you!" It was, undeniably—and these were—were those! Fanny's—his! All his, now, for the two six-months-old youngsters were safely in his arms.

They passed at that moment. Mollett blushed and looked away, but Amelia, womanlike, looked Rokesley over with a long, merciless stare—and then, taking her husband's hand, stepped into the carriage.



IF

IF I were a sultan and you were a slave,
I'd pawn all my jewels and buy you;
If I were a cave man, I'd come from my cave
And back to that cave I would hie you;
IF I were a king, I would make you my queen
Though half of my kingdom the fee were,
And proudly proclaim that in all my demesne
No couple were happy as we were.

If I were a pirate, I'd steal you away
And guard you as richest of treasure—
I'd load you with silver and gold by the dray,
And gems by the two-bushel measure;
If I were a soldier, I'd plunge in the strife
And rise, by a process most thrilling,
Till I, as a general, made you my wife
(Provided, of course, you were willing).

If I were a Croesus—— Alas, I am not,
Nor am I a soldier, a brave man,
A king, or a pirate with blood that is hot,
A sultan, or even a cave man!
But, sweetheart, although I am none of these things
And plenty of men are above me,
I'd have it all over them, pirates or kings,
If only you'd say that you love me!

BERTON BRALEY.



Love and the Rules

By Adele Luehrmann

Author of "The Ghost of Yesterday," etc.

IF they had chanced on one another in a dell in Arcady, their eyes must have met in just such a startled, widened glance, as if he had never before seen a girl or she a man, and there they would have stood and gazed, speechless with rapture—

But why pursue a futile supposition? The northeast corner of Fifth Avenue and Forty-fourth Street is not a dell in Arcady, and so they did not stand and gaze. On the contrary, seeing at once that she was not the sort of girl to be flattered by a stare, no matter how admiring, he turned away again the instant he realized that he was staring. For to a person brought up as Rodney West had been, the rules of courtesy and good breeding are paramount and prevail over instinct nine times out of ten. And though it seemed to him the severest self-denial he had been called upon to exercise in all his four-and-twenty years of life in this world of rules and restrictions, he did not permit his head to turn for another look, but walked on doggedly to the curb toward which he was making with the intention of crossing the street. Indeed, he even stepped from the curb and took a stride or two on the asphalt without turning.

Then the traffic officer blew his whistle, suddenly unleashing several col-

umns of waiting motors, and Rodney was driven back to the safety of the sidewalk. Regaining it, he did at last allow himself to look around, hopeful by that time of nothing more than a distant glimpse of the girl's bright hair beneath the small fur hat she wore.

To his astonishment, he found her at his side, halted also by the rush of vehicles. Again their eyes met, but now, before he could withdraw his a second time, he saw the light of recognition flash into hers and then a little cry of greeting came from her:

"Mr. Bradley!"

Rodney West was not easily confounded. He had had ample social experience and had talked to dozens of pretty girls without embarrassment, but this encounter rendered him suddenly witless. It was so unexpected, so undreamed of, that this particular girl, whose face had caught and held his glance in the crowded street only a moment before, looming there as a distant, unattainable vision, should now be standing beside him, a lovely reality, speaking to him, smiling at him, offering him her hand to touch.

He was poignantly aware of the hand, small and white-gloved, which had darted from the depths of a huge muff and was coming eagerly toward him. He felt one of his own hands

give an automatic start forward and knew that the other was attending to his hat; but for the moment, his face achieved no better response to her radiant welcome than a stupefied gape.

"I don't believe you remember me!" she challenged gayly. "Miss Estabrook—Marjorie Estabrook?"

Thought is incredibly swift at times. That approaching hand, making decision imperative, rallied Rodney's scattered faculties, and in a trice he had reviewed the possibilities and dangers of his position. Never had he so much wanted to know a girl as he wanted to know this one, and if he should tell her, as he knew he ought, that she had made a mistake, she would become again a distant vision, to fade from his sight forever. On the other hand, if he did not undeceive her, he would be taking a terrible chance of ignominious dismissal should she discover the error herself. Still, she could not have known the real Bradley well or she would not have mistaken some one else for him, and if a fellow kept his wits about him, he might somehow put the thing over. Besides, nothing venture, nothing gain. And, anyhow, it was worth the risk.

He gulped air and plunged.

"Oh, yes, of course!" he exclaimed. "Why—why, how do you do?"

His heart pounded excitedly against his ribs as their hands met, and he drew a hard breath. He was in for it now.

"How do *you* do?" she laughed back; but he noted, with a shiver down his spine, that the laugh died suddenly, and that her hand slipped too quickly from his. Something had evidently startled her—his voice probably. He feared that his Southern accent had again betrayed him, and inwardly cursed the provincialism of his speech. Her friend Bradley was probably from Pittsburgh or some other place where the letter "R" is treated with painful respect.

He waited apprehensively for her

next words, but she seemed to be waiting also, as alert as he, though she tried to hide the fact under a smile. The pause had already lengthened to awkwardness when she suddenly ended it.

"It's been ages since we met—hasn't it?" she asked lightly, throwing him a veiled, puzzled glance.

"It certainly has," he returned, glad to get off so easily.

"Let's see—just when was it?"

He was certain now that she was testing him, that she suspected him, but was not sure, and he was casting about in his mind rather desperately for some noncommittal answer when, to his relief, she replied to her question herself.

"It wasn't last summer, because I didn't go to Newport at all last summer—I was on the other side," she said. "So it must have been the year before. *Of course*—at Mrs. Lord's!" She laughed out joyously, in triumph at capturing the fugitive memory that she had been pursuing. "What a bully week-end she gave us, didn't she?"

"She certainly did," said Rodney, again thankful to escape a leading question, but uncomfortably conscious that, though he was skating safely on the thin ice, he was not acquitting himself brilliantly. Fortunately, however, she did not appear to notice the fact, but went on reviewing her acquaintance with the absent Bradley.

"And I saw you once after that, you remember. You came to tea after I got back to town."

He nodded his assent with a smile.

"And since then I have never heard a word about you from any one—not one word!"

She spoke half jestingly, half reproachfully, and the look she gave him was so clear and frank that it was plain all doubt of him had vanished. This was encouraging, but still more so was her unconscious revelation of the ex-

tent of her acquaintance with Bradley. She had played straight into his hand there, and on the strength of his luck, he risked a bolder answer.

"Was that my fault?" he asked, with a smile that might mean anything.

"Wasn't it?" she retorted, with a flash of her gray eyes between half-shut lids.

"I asked first," he parried.

"Well," she said, conceding that point. "But if it wasn't yours, whose was it?"

He hesitated. He felt that he had got into a dangerous corner and could not afford to take further chances. One false step now and he would be done for. He smiled to fill in the lengthening pause, hoping she would speak again and give him a clue. But he was disappointed. She waited silently, her eyes watching him expectantly.

"I—I make no accusations," he ventured finally, hitting upon that as safe.

To his relief, she broke into a laugh. Rodney laughed, too. He was forced to. It was the one thing to do under the circumstances. But he would have given a good deal to know just what it was she found so funny. She and Bradley had had a flirtation—that was evident. Besides, no chap could have lived in the same house with her over a week-end without something of the sort occurring. But what the details had been he could not make the wildest guess. And she was not likely to help him out.

"You don't dare make accusations!" she declared, when she had stopped laughing sufficiently to speak again.

"Oh—is that so?" he drawled back, with a gay impertinence to match her own mocking tone. He was beginning to enjoy himself, to extract zest from his danger. And she was so tantalizingly pretty when she laughed.

"You know perfectly well what will happen if you dare to mention names," she observed meaningly.

An involuntary chuckle escaped him.

He did indeed know what would happen, but she didn't! However, the spirit of daring had taken possession of him.

"Well, you know, too!" he ventured.

"Of course I do!"

"Then what's the use of mentioning names? Let the guilty be nameless."

"Oh, I'm willing that *he* should be!" she retorted.

"Ah, ha! Then it was a *he*! You admit it?"

"Admit it? I proclaim it! I always said so. It was you who insisted that *she* did it. Do you deny *that*?"

She laughed up at him triumphantly, as if defying him to dispute the fact that she had him at last.

He took a deep breath. He was getting beyond his depth, could feel the floods surging near to engulf him; but he had to make a reply of some sort, and in his panic he made a bold one:

"I don't have to deny it. You knew all the time that I was right."

He held his breath then, wondering what would happen. To his surprise, she drew back and her smile faded.

"Oh," she murmured, her brow lifting with a touch of hauteur. "So you want to quarrel again?"

So she and Bradley had quarreled! That explained the long break in their intercourse. Well, if Bradley was chump enough to quarrel with a girl like that, he could suit himself, but he was not Bradley, thank Heaven, and he would use the brains the Lord had given him.

"It's the last thing in the world I want," he assured her earnestly, adding in a lighter tone: "And to prove it, I here and now admit that you are, always were, and always will be entirely and eternally right—about that and everything else. Are you satisfied?"

She smiled.

"Time works wonders," she said with mock solemnity.

"Say, rather, absence makes the heart grow fonder."

At that, an involuntary giggle escaped her, followed immediately by a puzzled, questioning glance, and she drew away a trifle. Then, as if to cover her sudden discomposure, she spoke:

"But, seriously, where have you been all this time? In the South? Let me see—you're from Kentucky, aren't you?"

He hesitated. So Bradley was a Southerner. That explained things. He had been rather puzzled by his extraordinary success in carrying off the situation. However, he had better not lie unless he had to.

"No, Virginia," he answered.

"Oh, of course—Richmond."

"No, Norfolk."

"Well, you can't expect me to have remembered everything—now can you? I did better than you, anyhow," she bantered laughingly. "You didn't even remember me!"

"Of course I did."

"Of course you didn't! You looked at me as if you had never seen me before. I was scared to death for a moment. I thought I must have made a hideous mistake and spoken to a strange man."

At her words, a wave of shame swept over Rodney. He saw now what he done through her eyes, those sweet eyes that smiled up so confidently into his, and he was so appalled by the enormity of his offense that he felt he could not deceive her another instant.

"Miss Estabrook, I don't know how to tell—"

His impulsive confession was cut short. The traffic whistle again shrilled through the street noises, this time to clear the way for pedestrians, and they were swept across the avenue by the crowd behind them. When safely over, it was she who spoke first:

"In town for long, Mr. Bradley?"

"Why—perhaps," he answered. "I

had thought of going down to Palm Beach—later."

The truth was that he had meant to go to Florida that night, but Florida seemed suddenly very far away.

As if she understood the reason for his doubtful tone, she gave him a brilliant smile.

"Well, if you *don't* go, I hope you'll come to see me," she said. "Come to tea some afternoon—to-morrow, if you like."

"Thanks. I'll be glad to."

He took the hand she offered in farewell while he thought fast. It was inconceivable that he should go to her home under false pretenses, even if he could find out where she lived. Equally impossible was it to explain himself there on the street, where she would probably walk away in disgust and leave him before he had won her forgiveness. And she must forgive him. He must see her again.

"Don't you think to-morrow is a long way off?" he asked, feeling that, with the hand that was slipping from his grasp, she herself was slipping away from him.

"They say it never comes," she returned gayly.

"Anything special to do now?"

"No, I think not." She seemed to consider. "Just going home to lunch—that's all."

"But why go home? Perfectly good lunches nearer than home. In fact, we can find one right in there."

He pointed toward the handsome building beside which they were standing. Her eyes followed the gesture, then came back to his.

"It's awfully nice of you," she said doubtfully, as if tempted.

"Please!" he urged eagerly.

"I really ought not to, you know."

"Why?"

"Because people are such cats." She shrugged her shoulders impatiently. "It's an awful bore being a girl."

"But aren't there places where—well, where there wouldn't be any cats?"

"Yes, but——" She hesitated, looking again toward the famous restaurant. "After all, nearly everybody's gone South by now," she murmured reflectively. "There probably won't be a soul in there that knows who I am." She gave an amused little laugh; then abruptly added, with a reckless toss of her head: "Anyway, I'll risk it." And as if that settled the matter, she started forward.

But now he demurred.

"I don't want you to do anything you think you ought not to, Miss Estabrook," he told her anxiously. He felt suddenly responsible for her, knowing how hedged about by conventions a young girl of her kind was in New York—that it was really not considered proper for her to lunch alone with a man in a public place. New York was not Norfolk, where everybody knew everybody else. "Why not go to some little tea room where we are sure that there won't be any one——"

She cut him off.

"Oh, it's all right, I guess. Everybody I know is at Palm Beach." Again an odd, amused laugh escaped her.

"Are you going down?" he asked, as they walked toward the entrance of the restaurant.

"I dare say I shall have to," she said with a sigh. "In another week, there won't be a soul left in town."

"I wish you would. My mother's there, and I promised her I'd join her. I just ran up here for a few days. Glad I did—now."

"So am I." She threw him a merry, sidelong glance.

He saw that she was taking the affair as a lark and meant to enjoy it accordingly, and he hugged himself joyously. Of course it would not do now to discard his masquerade until after luncheon, because that would spoil her

fun, her innocent relish of her forbidden fruit. And in an hour more, they would have become so well acquainted that she couldn't be so very angry when he made his confession.

They chose a table and settled themselves. Emerging from her coat, she appeared in a simple blouse, dainty and girlish and just sheer enough to reveal the soft outlines of her arms and shoulders, and of a coral tint that exactly matched her cheeks. She made an alluring picture.

The luncheon went merrily. Rodney's one concern was to steer the talk away from himself—as Bradley—and this proved easy, as his companion seemed willing enough to stick to impersonal topics, such as the theater, dancing, and sports. She was in a gay mood, ready to be amused and pleased with everything, and he was called on for little more than a sympathetic bass accompaniment to her bubbling treble. The lark was turning out a huge success.

But at last their spoons had touched bottom in their Tortoni glasses, and the waiter had brought the check and been paid.

She began to draw on her gloves.

"What now?" he asked, wondering if it might not be possible to delay again the hour of reckoning.

"Oh, home now—really," she announced. "It's been too lovely. I can't tell you how much I have enjoyed it—more than anything I've done in ever so long."

He could not doubt her sincerity, yet he said, leaning toward her across the table:

"I wish you meant that."

"But I do!"

"Truly?"

"Of course."

He hesitated.

"Then maybe you'll forgive me for—for inviting you and——"

But he balked at the plain truth.

It was not any easier to confess now than it had been an hour before; indeed, the delay seemed to have made it harder, to have made his offense greater. Besides, he was more attracted by her than ever and consequently the more afraid of losing her. However, he saw that she was waiting for him to go on. She had paused in the putting on of her gloves and sat, expectant eyes on his face.

"Will you promise me something?" he began at last.

"Of course. What is it?"

"Promise me to sit quite still until I've finished what I have to say."

She sat back a little in her seat and looked at him in surprise, but she answered as before:

"Of course." Then, as he did not at once continue, she added wonderingly: "What is it?"

He wavered a moment longer until, despairing of his ability to do anything but blurt out the truth, he let her have it:

"My name is not Bradley. I'm not the man you took me for. I've never been to Newport. I'd never seen you until to-day."

When it was over, he held his breath. But she kept her promise and sat quite still—too still, indeed, for she seemed to him to be petrified with astonishment and horror. He wished that she would say something—anything. But she only sat there, still and dumb, waiting.

"I know how unpardonable it was to take advantage of your mistake, to deceive you as I did and make you talk to a strange man, even lunch with him, all the time believing he was your friend," he pleaded. "But I can tell you all about myself and about my people. My name is Rodney West and I am from Norfolk. That much was true, anyway," he concluded lamely.

Her eyelids shut and opened over the wide eyes; then her gaze dropped

to the glove she held and she began once more to draw it on. He read in the action an intimation of her displeasure, definite, final.

"You won't forgive me?" he questioned miserably.

"Why did you do it?" she asked, without looking up.

"Because I knew that if I told you I was not the man you took me for, it would end everything right there—that I should never see you again. And I wanted to know you. Why, I was attracted to you when I first saw you coming up the street, and I wished then that I knew you. And I—I thought you noticed me, too, though I know now it was because you thought you knew me. And afterward, when you spoke to me, it seemed as if Heaven had sent me the chance, and I couldn't let it go by. And if I had, I'd have been sorry for it all the rest of my life. Though I'll be sorry enough as it is, if you won't forgive me. But you will—you must!"

She was still fumbling with the buttons of her glove, her head bent during his long plea, but now, as he finished, she glanced up.

"If you were so attracted when you first saw me—as you say you were—why did you look away so quickly?" she asked.

"Why—I didn't want to stare at you—or, rather, I did want to, but I wouldn't let myself. I knew you wouldn't like that."

"No, of course not," she conceded. "But if you really wanted so much to know me, as you say you did, why didn't you—do something?"

"Do?" His blue eyes stared at her blankly. "What could I do?"

"I don't know," she said with a shrug. "The point is that you're trying to justify having deceived me by pretending that you couldn't help it, that you were so irresistibly attracted

But you certainly didn't act like it—at first!"

"But what could I do?" he protested again.

"I don't know," she repeated. "But if you had really felt about me as you are trying to make me believe, you couldn't have turned away and made no effort to see me again. You couldn't have done it!" she insisted, somewhat heatedly. "You just *couldn't*! But—you didn't even turn to look again."

"No, but I wanted to. I never did anything in my life that was as hard as not looking. But I couldn't be rude and offensive——"

"Was it less offensive to lie to me afterward, to pretend——"

"No, it was abominable of me and I hated it. But it looked like my one chance to know you, and I was desperate. And I don't regret it even now, because you and I might never have met in any other way."

"That's true," she agreed. "But I wish we had met in some other way."

"So do I, since you do. But, after all, what difference does it make? The important thing is that ~~we~~ we did meet."

"Then you think the end justifies the means?"

"I certainly do!"

"But you only see it from your side," she objected. "Try to imagine how you'd feel if I had deceived you."

"That's easy," he answered, relieved that she was willing to argue the matter. "Now you're I and I'm you, and knowing how beautiful and fascinating I am, I don't blame *you* in the least."

His nonsense failed to bring the smile he expected.

"I didn't mean reversing us—I meant reversing the whole case," she explained seriously. "Suppose you had mistaken me for a girl you knew, and I had pretended to be that girl and had gone to lunch and the rest. Wouldn't it make a difference in *your* feeling about me?"

He laughed again.

"I have a moving picture in my mind's eye of you doing such a thing!"

"You did it."

"That's different."

"Because you're a man, you mean?"

"Of course. No girl would do such a thing—no nice girl. She would have to take a chance on the man's not being the right sort, and no nice girl would take such a chance."

"She could tell the minute he spoke to her what sort he was."

"Oh, no, she couldn't. A perfectly decent man might pretend to know a girl, knowing that if she were the right sort she would tell him straight off that he had made a mistake, and that would end it and no harm done. But if she didn't end it——" He finished the sentence with a shrug.

"He'd know at once that *she* wasn't the right sort? Yes, of course. You couldn't reverse the case. I see that now. It is different for a man," she admitted.

"Of course it is! Then you do forgive me?"

She rose without replying, and he sprang up, also. It was not until they were again on the street that he had an opportunity to remind her that she had not yet said she had forgiven him.

"Of course I forgive you," she said with a faint smile. "I see that it was all right—for a man."

"And may I come to tea to-morrow?"

She shook her head.

"No, not to-morrow. You see, although I understand perfectly how all this came about, still, I don't feel that I can see you again unless we can be introduced in the usual way."

"But why?" he protested in dismay.

"Because—I feel uncomfortable about it. I should think you would understand that," she ended with a note of challenge.

"Of course I see that it's natural you should feel that way. Only——"

Well, you'll help me out, won't you, to find somebody that knows——"

"When do you go to Florida?" she interrupted.

"Why—I had meant to go to-night. But of course now——"

"No, no, you mustn't change your plans. Go to-night. I'll be going down in a few days, and it'll be easy enough to find somebody there that knows me to introduce you."

He did not answer for a moment, but studied her face curiously.

"What's the matter?" he demanded suddenly. "You haven't quite forgiven me, have you? You seem so—so different, somehow."

"No, I'm not different," she returned. "It's only that I am waking up to the fact that I'm talking to a stranger——"

"A stranger! Is that how I seem to you?" he exclaimed. "You don't seem like that to me. But never mind. It's to be just as you say. I'll wait until somebody or other that neither of us cares a rap about mumbles our names: 'Miss Estabrook, Mr. West.' Oh, don't you see how absurd it is? What difference does an introduction make now? We've met, haven't we?"

"A nice girl doesn't meet men that way."

"Oh, all right," he sighed resignedly. "But at least let me go South when you do. There may be some one on the train——"

"No, you must go to-night. That's a condition."

"But you'll tell me where I can find you there? You don't mean to make me hunt for you?"

She disclaimed such an intention and gave him the name of her hotel.

"I'll be sitting on the doorstep waiting," he declared.

"Good-by," she answered.

"Au revoir," he corrected.

"Au revoir," she agreed, and, with a smile, turned away.

He stood still staring after her, and

just before she was lost in the crowd, she looked back and smiled again, with a gay little wave of her muff.

At the first corner, she left Fifth Avenue and turned westward, and abruptly her manner changed. Her brisk pace slackened, her shoulders drooped, the bright alertness faded from her face. With set jaw and somber eyes, she went on slowly past Sixth Avenue to Broadway. Pausing there for a moment irresolutely, she again walked westward, and at a house in the middle of the block, let herself in with a key, stopped in the narrow hallway long enough to look through a batch of letters that she found on a dusty rack, then climbed three flights of dark stairs to a room on the top floor.

Closing the door behind her, she backed up against it and let her eyes move slowly about—over the cheap white spread on the ugly double bed, past the cracked mirror of the antiquated bureau, to the hideous monstrosity that filled one corner and that she called a wardrobe. Her appraising glance took in every worn spot in the cheap carpet, the shabbiness of the upholstery of every chair, and missed not a single blotch on the discolored walls.

Suddenly she laughed out, if the sound she made could be called a laugh, so short and mirthless was it; after which she crossed to the bureau, dropped her gloves there, and, taking from the wardrobe a large box, she laid her furs away in it—stole and muff and hat—each in protecting folds of tissue paper. Her coat and outer skirt she took off, also, and hung up; then removed the dainty pink blouse and put it carefully away in a drawer, sheltering herself afterward in a faded silk kimono. With a bottle of cleansing fluid, she next turned to her gloves, rubbing their soiled tips with close attention until they were white again. Then she carried them to a window,

opened it, and fastened them securely to a string drawn tautly across the outside of the sash. Leaving them to air, she closed the window again.

But now she did not turn at once to another task. She stood looking out on the rows of uninviting windows in the backs of houses as dingy as her own, and down into the neglected yards below. And once more she gave a hard, joyless laugh.

Then the door of the room opened abruptly, and another girl came in. She was dark and full-fleshed, vigorously built, and she closed the door after her with a sharp bang.

The girl at the window did not stir.

"Hello!" said the other, with an accent of surprise. "Where have you been? Why didn't you show up at Gladman's?"

"Knew it wasn't any use."

"Well, it wasn't. If there was one woman in that office there were fifty. We waited two hours; then out trots Gladdie himself, looks us over like a bunch of third-rate cattle, and says the parts in the new play are all filled. Now I ask you what were we dragged there for—at lunch time, too!"

"No luck anywhere else?"

"Luck!" ejaculated the dark girl disgustedly. "There ain't no sich animal!" She opened a cracker box that she had brought in with her, peeling the paper wrapping off with impatient jerks. "But what did you do? You ought to have drawn something. You looked like Miss Ready Money in those furs. Have a cracker?"

"No, thanks. I had lunch—had it at Sherry's."

"What?" Surprise arrested the speaker's hand halfway to her mouth with food. "Good Lord!" she gasped. "With whom?"

"His name is—Bradley."

"Bradley? Don't think I ever heard of him."

"You haven't," said the girl at the

window. "I met him at Newport, at a week-end party of Mrs. Effingham Lord's."

"What?" The other stared at her companion's back in blank wonder. "What do you mean?"

"I mean that I picked him up—so to speak."

"Picked him—— Naomi Jackson, what are you talking about?"

"You're almost as shocked at the thought as he was."

"I don't believe you! I don't believe you'd do such a thing!"

Naomi Jackson turned from the window to face her friend.

"But I did," she said. "That's the sort of girl I am, you see." She walked over to a chair and sat down, and as her companion continued to regard her in speechless wonder, she presently went on. "Don't you ever get dead tired of yourself, Clare—of yourself, and this room, and the house, and the people and the food, and of Broadway—and everything? Don't you? And don't you just get fed up on the men we know—fed up and sick?"

Clare gave a deep, eloquent grunt of assent.

"Well, that's how it was to-day. I meant to go to Gladman's, though I knew there was no chance. And afterward I meant to make the rounds. But when I'd gone a block or two down Broadway, I suddenly couldn't stand it another minute. I had to get away from the sight of it and the sound of it. I felt that if I didn't, I'd die. So—I went over to Fifth Avenue. I hadn't a thought of anything except just to get away from all this over here. Even when I spoke to him——"

"You spoke *first*?" came the horrified question.

"Yes, I spoke first," Naomi answered steadily. "I knew he wasn't a New York man by the interested way he looked at everything, and—— Well,

I just put on my best Majorie Estabrook manner and played a little of the first act of 'The Bargain.'"

"I see. That's where the Bradley comes in."

Naomi nodded.

"I thought he'd tell me that wasn't his name and that would end it, but he pretended he was Bradley, so I had either to back down or see it through. It was rather fun sparring with him—at first."

"Was he all right?"

"Oh, yes. I saw that when I first noticed him. It was his eyes. They're blue and—they look as if you could walk straight through them and come out on the other side—safe."

"Huh!" said Clare, as if the description did not strongly prepossess her. "When do you see him again?"

"I don't see him again."

"Oh!" murmured Clare after a moment, with a note of understanding. "I see. He was all right and had wonderful eyes, but you couldn't stand him again even at Sherry's. 'Twas ever

thus, my child. Let it be a lesson to you."

"It will be," said Naomi, turning back to the window. "But—I could have stood him again—at Sherry's or—or in a Harlem flat for the rest of my life—I think."

"Good Lord, as bad as that? Then for Heaven's sake, why——"

"He leaves for Palm Beach to-night."

"Oh—too bad! Couldn't you have kept him?"

"No."

"Oh, too bad!" Clare repeated, and after waiting in silence for some response, "'Twas ever thus," she said again sympathetically, and turned her attention once more to her belated luncheon.

A silence followed, broken only by the crunching of dry crackers.

"It's a funny world," said Naomi Jackson suddenly.

"Funny!" her companion retorted with warmth. "It's rotten!"

Naomi gave a barely audible sigh.

"You win," she said.

The January AINSLEE'S will contain another NAOMI JACKSON story
by Adele Luehrmann.



THE WASTE

I LOVE the waste, be it or marsh or moor,
The winds that sweep across it, and the sky
That leans above its reaches tenderly,
More than the ordered garths with walls secure,
It bears a benediction, and the lure
Of its immensity takes the gazer's eye;
Its scope is elemental—leagues that lie
Lofty or low in varied vestiture.

It owns no bondage save the season's change;
It has the haunting grace of loneliness
By which the soul of man is ever awed;
It harbors beauty that is wild and strange;
And in the freedom of its fastnesses
One, so it seems, might walk apart with God.
CLINTON SCOLLARD.



Magic Life

By May Edginton

Author of "The Woman Who Broke the Rule,"
"He That Is Without Sin," etc.



CHAPTER I.

NANCE could not help whispering to herself, "Just supposing—" She did not finish the question except in a thousand confusions of thought. Still glowing and burning from the tremendous pace at which they had whirled down the frozen river through the aching cold, her rapture forbade coherence. Never before had she felt like this—that it was good merely to be alive, to breathe and sing and skate and dance and go sleigh-riding over a vastness of hard snow to the sound of bells that rang as joyfully as if they were hung upon a wedding coach.

She had said yesterday, when she was all tucked down under the bearskin rug and the chestnut horse streamed away like a flake of fire:

"There's something about bells—something almost—"

And he had caught her words up swiftly:

"Something bridal, isn't there? Very well, Miss Abbott. Away we go! And I wish—"

He did not always finish his sentences, either—at least not when he was with her. He would begin something impulsive, hot as lava—she could feel the fire suddenly shining near her—volcanic. Then he would stop. He was doing some hard thinking, and she knew it. She, too, was thinking hard,

though in a distressful confusion, and she hoped he did not know it.

For if he did? Just supposing—

On the dressing table in the big room which her aunt had given her, was a photograph in a morocco frame. When she came in, now, from that half-mile-a-minute skating on the great petrified river, she sat down and looked at this photograph. Her elbows among the vanity pots, her chin in her hands, she gazed at it disconsolately. Yet she had carried it in her trunk across the Atlantic, and taken it out with a flourish, and set it there proudly for all to admire and see. He was not a figure of romance, but he was Willie Chase, who owned a coal mine and who was, besides, one of the biggest financiers in England. He was a prize and he was hers.

She took off the fur cap which had been tied down over her ears and ran her fingers through her crumpled hair. Her cheeks were as scorched as if she had sat out in a midsummer hayfield. Still looking at Chase, she began to unfasten her fur coat.

He had given her the coat and cap for this Canadian visit, which he had been reluctant for her to make. It was almost as if he had had a prophetic vision. All the same, he had tried to hide his anxiety at letting her out of his sight before he had her bound and, taking her into the best fur

shop in town, he had given her these sables. She wondered idly now, looking at him:

"Did you think you would obsess me every time I wore them?"

She sighed petulantly and, casting herself on the rug before the fire, began to unbutton her long gaiters.

The eyes in the photograph seemed to follow and rest upon her proprietorially.

There was complete stillness around the house. All within was warm, steam heated. The double windows kept out the biting frost. The fire was a concession to her own ideas of a cozy appearance. The room was hung with cretonne as prettily as her bedroom at home in London. Yet there was a difference; it was as if, in spite of the same comforts, she had stepped straight into real life from an enervating hot-house. Never before had she met life so frank, so free. It was like hearing a child tell the truth in words of one syllable.

She was still on the rug before the fire, basking like a cat, when a girl knocked at her door and came in.

For just a moment she stood looking down on Nance Abbott before she spoke. Then she said in a soft drawl, which, dovelike as was its quality, yet had sharpness in it:

"Mrs. Prospect was getting alarmed about you. She was afraid you'd gone too far and it would get dark. She seemed to think I might have gone with you, but the wagon had brought the stores in and I was checking them."

Nance murmured, putting up a lazy hand to pull the other down beside her:

"What nonsense, Miss Dobson! Aunt Nella is as fidgety as mother. Besides, I was quite safe. I met Mr. Cornwell."

"Oh, you met Blair Cornwell. He's a good skater, isn't he?"

"He's wonderful. Does he do everything well?"

The other girl laughed a little, and her laugh, though as gentle as her voice, had also the same underflow in it.

"The men out here are so different," said Nance.

"They have to be."

"I suppose so."

"Perhaps you wish you were staying longer to study them more."

"I do," said Nance. "And I've only a fortnight. Think! Only a fortnight more!"

"You'd never be happy out here, you know."

"I don't know. Perhaps I should."

"You're too soft, too luxurious, too artificial."

"Well, life here is quite luxurious, quite soft enough for me, Miss Dobson."

"Oh, I dare say. I wish—won't you call me Leila? It seems absurd—two girls of near the same age—"

Nance Abbott paused a moment or two. She could not help it. It was in her to pause just while the inbred thought flashed through her mind:

"Really! It's rather presuming! Aunt Nella's paid companion house-keeper!"

Then she saw the other's eyes upon her, large, light eyes with a steady glow in them, and she answered rather too hastily:

"Oh, thank you! If you really don't mind. I was going to say—Leila—that I just love the life out here. It's grand. And as for hardships, I don't see what any one has to grumble about."

"Not here," said Leila. "This is a rich man's ranch, run for his pleasure. This is Mr. Prospect's hobby. Mrs. Prospect has as many servants as she wants—half-breeds, of course, but they work well—and she has me to save her all worries. I came out from England last year. This? This is luxury. But you might go elsewhere—to Mr. Cornwell's place, for instance—"

"Oh, Miss Dobson—Leila—what is it like?"

"Very different."

"You've been out to it?"

"He took me last summer."

Nance raised her eyes and looked at her jealously. Why should Blair Cornwall drive Leila Dobson to his ranch? All over her fair, soft face suspicion dropped a cloud.

Leila Dobson went on:

"It's the usual lone settler's place—rough furniture, no central heating—Oh, different from this! You haven't seen all aspects of life in Canada. You're the kind of girl who expects first-class hotels to be provided everywhere you go, aren't you? You've been soft all your life, and you're going to marry a rich man and live soft ever after."

A tiny shudder ran through Nance. She was suddenly chilled beside the warm fire. Her marriage! She avoided the eyes of the portrait on the dressing table. She reached up to a chair where a box of sweets lay, pulled it down beside her, and put a bonbon in her mouth.

"You will always be able to comfort yourself," said Leila when she had watched her.

Nance answered a little angrily:

"Comfort myself! Please, for what?"

"Most people need comfort at some time or other," said Leila.

"Oh!" said Nance, with a noncommittal coldness that had a touch of arrogance in it.

Leila was looking at Willie Chase. It was a full-length portrait, and showed him as a heavy man, not very tall, probably in the late thirties. He was clean shaven and remarkably square; his jaw was rather thick than strong. He had a look about him of pugnacity and acquisitiveness—an almost rapacious look. When Leila had

assimilated this, she put the portrait down silently.

Nance had watched her.

She yawned.

"I'm going to dress, Miss Dobson."

"Oh," said the other, "call me Leila. I'm not much older than you, you know, though it's possible that I look it. I'm twenty-eight. I think you're about"—pausing for a reply, she received none—"twenty-four. You don't look that, of course. But there's the difference—you've lived always in life's first-class hotels; I haven't. You're so soft, so pink, so sleek. Nothing's ever worried you, has it? You're never in a hurry, are you? To-morrow does as well as to-day for everything you have to do. I suppose you'll look a mere child till you're forty. You remind me of a sweet carnation. Well, I envy you with all my heart and soul!"

"I'm going to dress," Nance replied, getting up from the rug.

Leila Dobson smiled and went smoothly out, saying:

"And I ought to be overlooking the supper table. Every one within thirty miles is coming to-night."

"He is coming," Nance thought.

She went to her glass and lighted all the candles about it. She took off her blouse and skirt and, letting her hair down, looked at herself.

Even that girl—who should have hated her for her advantages if she didn't—had likened her to a sweet carnation. She was tall and round, and all her slender limbs were softly turned, and with her pale-brown hair falling below her waist, she knew that she was lovely. Of course, she had known it before, because even her still beautiful mother, her selfish mother, had resigned gracefully in her favor some years ago; but never had it given her the thrill of joy that it gave her to-night. There seemed a direct reason, a divine purpose, for which she had been made beautiful. And while the whim came

to her, and, leaning her palms on the table, she stared forward into the glass, something impelled her eyes away, down to the portrait of her lover. It was a sensation of being peeped at, pried at; his look followed and fixed on her.

It said to her plainly: "You are beautiful for me."

She put out her hand and dashed the photograph face downward. It lay there and she looked at it.

He had been intruding. He gave her the sensation of a dreadful intrusion when she had taken off her blouse and let her hair down.

For the first time, through the smooth, respectful, prayerful loveliness, she felt the rapacity behind. Often, she hadn't wanted his kisses, had schemed little petulant schemes to avoid them. Now she began definitely to think:

"How about when I can't avoid them? When we're married? When— Ugh!"

Up till now her thoughts had mainly run:

"When we're married, I shall be Mrs. Willie Chase with twelve thousand a year. I'm to have a car all to myself. I shall dress at Marguerite's. I shall give lovely parties. We shall have a chef, and I shall have a French maid. We'll go all round the world for the honeymoon."

The word, for the first time, abashed and worried her. Willie Chase would be able to look at her any time—and kiss her.

He seemed old to her. Money making had aged him. Yet, if it hadn't been for his money, she would never, of course—never, of course—

She pulled at the string of her camisole vehemently, and in doing so, tore a bit of inserted lace. Quickly it almost restored her thoughts. The camisole was one of her mother's, one of a beautiful set lent her for this visit to her

relatives. She had needed new ones, but her mother had overspent her allowance so dreadfully last season that all she had been able to do was to throw open her wardrobe and say, distracted:

"Child, take anything you wish! I haven't another sixpence to spare, and your father *is* so cross!"

So, the broken ribbon in her hand, rueful over the tear in those few square inches of real lace, once more the girl's facile mind veered:

"It will be *rather* nice when I haven't to borrow mummie's things any more. Five hundred's a rotten dress allowance for both of us. Oh, *rather* nice! All my things shall be hand-painted *ninon* underneath, with just a little silk for hard wear. I can pay the bills after if mummy can't pay them. It will be gorgeous to be really rich."

She changed her underclothes and put on a little filmy dress and satin shoes and earrings, and, sitting in a rocking-chair, rocked while she manicured her nails. She remembered that she rather wanted one of those wide gold bracelets one wore high up on one's upper arm. They were chic through a thin sleeve. When she got home, she would take Willie to Bond Street and tell him all about it. Her heart ached for it.

He always understood so well how to ease any heartache connected with money.

When she explained to him that he could have a special bracelet made with a tiny lock, and that he could keep the key, she felt sure the idea would please him immensely. He would love to lock upon her a gay fetter which could be removed only at his will.

Sleigh bells outside!

She jumped to her feet and stood palpitating.

Turning to the glass, she looked in. Was she perfect? Was she beautiful enough? She doubted if the wind—

But when she saw herself in that mo-

ment, she was dumfounded. Her soul glowed through the pretty covering of flesh and chiffon, and in fear of it, she smiled timidly; whispered to it, "No, you must not! You must not!" But she seemed to be looking far out, through open doors, to a sort of endless perpetuation of love life.

Outside, again the bells shook, and a horse trotted briskly stableward. Did she really know so well the beat of that chestnut's feet?

Before she had turned away from her mirror again, Mrs. Prospect knocked and sailed in, jubilant. She was happy because she was going to give a large party, and she liked giving. She had rather the look of a fashionable woman thickened by natural air and appetite and simplicities into the robustness of a milkmaid, and she was not fashionable now, either. Rather was she merely resplendent, dressed by the efforts of a little sewing woman who came out, by the week, from Calgary, to show the rich settler's wife the latest fashions.

"Oh, my dear," said the kind woman, pausing to survey the girl, "you remind me so of your mother! At your age, she was just like you—married, though, of course. We married earlier, then. You look sweet and stronger than when you came to us. We've done you good."

"Lots of good, Aunt Nella."

"Or some one's done you good." She looked a little askance, uneasy. And, picking up the prone portrait, she added: "What a pity he isn't here to see you to-night! I expect he dances well, my dear?"

"He doesn't dance at all."

"That's a pity," said Aunt Nella.

"I'm not so sure," said the girl. "If one marries a man, surely that is enough? One wants to dance with some one else."

"Blair Cornwell dances beautifully," said Aunt Nella, as if she could not

help mentioning the name, and yet as if it were tugged from her.

"Does he?"

"Why don't you wear your ring, my dear?" Mrs. Prospect asked.

Nance said hurriedly:

"Oh—I don't know. Why should I? Engagement rings are stupid, anyhow. I was proud of it at first. I hadn't many really valuable things of my own, because we're so poor, you know."

"On nearly three thousand a year, my dear? Yes, I suppose so, in London. You don't know how to be happy."

The girl leaned back against her dressing table, fingering the cover with quick white fingers.

"Well, one must have money. Dad gives mother five hundred to dress us both, and we have to squeeze things out of it, too. And the rent's high, mother says——"

"She should have a flat instead of a house, in a cheaper quarter."

"Oh, but one must be *in* things. One can't live where—where people don't live. You've been out here in this funny, ducky place so long that you've forgotten, Aunt Nella. Poor mother's never able to pay her bills. She gives a little on account when they press her. I shall be glad to be off her hands. Then she'll have the whole five hundred to herself."

"And when are you going to be off her hands?" asked Aunt Nella, swaying in the rocking-chair.

"I—I haven't exactly made up my mind. Oh, soon, of course. Very soon. What made you ask?"

"We want to mail our present in time."

"You're a sweet thing, Aunt Nella! Do give me a small tiara."

"You look nicer with just your own pretty hair. A girl like you!"

"One must have things."

"I tell you what," said Aunt Nella.

"You're bound to a treadmill, you and your mother. I should never again live a life where I 'must' do or have anything. However, you'll look very well in a tiara, no doubt. A tiara it shall be. I have a friend in New York who'll pick me a beauty. You needn't fear, child."

"Aunt Nella, as if your taste——"

"Hadn't run to seed!" said Mrs. Prospect, eying her purple satin lap. "You have your mother's taste, of course. You'll always do her credit, and do your husband credit. Did your Willie Chase like your coming out here all alone, child?"

"He was nervous."

"And well he might be," said the matron, getting up. And she advanced upon the girl and, putting her plump hands upon her shoulders, wheedled her: "My dear, look here. I'm so anxious that nothing should happen during your visit to us that would—that might—in any way upset your dear mother's plans. Her plans are—are—no doubt, you know, my dear—the best for you. And she has always had such great schemes for you. I know by her letters to me, you see, my dear. We mustn't forget our ties and promises. Though you mustn't think, child, that I don't understand how one feels when one is young. I've not forgotten."

The girl looked down. Her breath quickened. Her half laugh was evasive, a little fearful.

"To hear you talk," she murmured, "one might think——"

The matron patted her shoulders and, beginning with more wisdom, sighed, laughed, and desisted.

"You're a wise child," she said. "You're very, very wise. They've given you a long head. You're wiser than I would like any daughter of mine to be if I had one."

"Shall I go down now, Aunt Nella?"

"Do, my dear," said Mrs. Prospect, regarding her. "No one has come yet

except Blair, and he is remarkably early."

"Perhaps he has come to help Miss Dobson."

"*Perhaps!*" said Mrs. Prospect.

Before her understanding, Nance retreated. She left her room on light feet, singing to defy her own heart. The staircase began in the center of the long corridor into which the bedrooms opened, and, standing at the stairhead, she could look down into the hall. And there she stood looking, anticipating, knowing in her own too wise head her own foolishness, which was sucking her slowly toward the maelstrom of passion. Below her, at the foot of the wide, straight stairway, the young man stood looking up. And he began:

"She is coming——"

and paused on an upward note that finished the quotation for him as well as if he had finished it himself. As if he did not yet dare to do that, he stopped, and in the girl's head the words ran on:

She is coming, my own, my sweet;
Were it ever so airy a tread,
My heart would hear it and beat
Were it earth in an earthy bed.

For at school, and there only, as is the way of most modern girls, she had read her Tennyson.

She came slowly down the stairs. Once she had posed for a Bond Street photographer on a staircase, and the portrait had been a triumph. Unworthily, the thought flashed into her mind. Her feet were very slender, fitted with slippers as a hand is with a glove; her short skirts flowed around her. She was London beauty at its best, transplanted to a Calgary ranch; she was like a garden rose upon the prairie. Ever since she had left school at eighteen, she had been subtly trained and primed—though, indeed, the germ had been in her since babyhood—in the use of her power. She could no more,

now, help using it, flashing it, planting it like a stray seed upon her path, than the rose could have helped giving scent. But it was conscious; she took it into her hands willfully as she descended the stairs to the waiting man. The sense of it filled her brain with delight.

On the last step, she held out her hand to him, and he did not let it go while they walked together toward the fire in the hall. There she pulled it away and stood pretending to warm her foot.

"I didn't tire you this afternoon?" he asked eagerly.

"It was glorious," she said. "I never had such skating. But my face! It was cut just into horrid little strips!"

And she turned it toward him, softly glowing, smoothed with the remedies in her vanity pots, powdered imperceptibly into flawlessness. He wanted to touch her cheek with his fingers; it was so like white velvet. But he only said:

"An English girl's complexion is a wonder. How many dances may I have?"

"Can you dance?"

"Try me."

"Do you mean here and now?"

"Well, that's a thought! Why not? This floor's like wax."

"The band isn't here."

"I'll sing, then."

It was wonderful how that dance went. His voice was beautiful, so full of life and light; it was young and conquering. They fox-trotted up and down the shining floor, and he sang coon things; they two-stepped and one-stepped to his tuneless whistling; and when she, tireless in London ballrooms, was ready to gasp, "Let's stop and breathe!" she was swung suddenly into a waltz. It went like silk. He *could* waltz! And he was singing "Mandalay" tenderly. With the languorous movement, she got her breath again, and sang softly with him, little snatches

under her breath, breaking into the chorus, her voice swelling and falling with his.

If her mother could see her now! Oh, if that pretty, blasé lady could step in here and stand where Leila Dobson was standing, at the door of the supper room, staring into the hall, and could see her pretty and equally blasé daughter waltzing to the sound of a man's singing as if to all the golden harps in heaven! If she could see the lamps in the girl's eyes, and the real redness of her lips and cheeks where the blood came warm, obedient to a human call! If she could see that her daughter's partner wasn't even wearing evening dress—just a soft collar and a lounge suit of surpassing shabbiness! And if she could see his ardent face, beaten by weather into red and brown, his straight-gazing, passionate eyes, the unconquered set of his mouth and chin—a sight to frighten any worldly mother of a marriageable daughter! If she could be there!

But it was only Leila Dobson whom Nance presently saw staring at them from the frame of the supper-room door. Something in the survey of those large, light eyes choked the singing in Nance's throat; she stopped dancing forcibly, still in Cornwell's arms, so that he could feel the thud of her heart against his own, and she said almost petulantly:

"I shall be tired out before the evening begins."

Again he followed her over toward the fireplace.

"But have I satisfied you? Will I do? How many dances may I have?"

"I haven't seen the program."

"That's soon rectified." He strode to the nook at the left of the fire and picked up a handful of cards with dangling pencils. He disentangled two, saying, "Now! Here we are!"

Leila Dobson turned back abruptly into the supper room.

Blair Cornwell seated himself beside Nance and handed her a program. Pretending to study it, she was seeing nothing but his red-brown, turbulent face; not pretending to study his, he looked at the red blood under the velvet white of her cheek. He was delighted and bemused by the dangle of earrings in her ears. She was all that was soft and lovely. She was man's vision of woman. Just at present, he couldn't help taking her as she was. He saw the perfectly dressed head and, thinking only, "What hair!" had no misgivings as to the expensiveness of the art that maintained its glossy condition and suave arrangement. Enchanted with the small white hands, he had not yet thought of them performing duties—say in some Canadian home. He was not engaged upon any such debate just now.

The evening was enough, following so lucky an afternoon. He urged upon her his claim for dances.

Nance Abbott spent a wonderful evening, in which she seemed to have been born into a new world. People came, unlike people she had ever met before—people who were bent upon enjoying themselves. Few of the women had powder upon their wind-seared faces, but they seemed very happy. They danced with inexhaustible energy; they ate supper with fine natural appetites. Their clothes were for the most part appalling. Only one man wore evening dress. And yet Nance was aware that she was enjoying herself immensely, as she had not enjoyed herself since her coming-out dance. It was like a large and happy children's party.

Most of the time she was in Blair's arms; they danced together wonderfully. When they sat out, on the stairs or even among the crowd, in the billiard or supper rooms, they had so much to tell each other. They talked, naturally, about themselves. It happened to be the biggest subject in the world and

each took it seriously. So seriously, in fact, did they take it that presently the man's eyes were opened, and he saw.

He knew himself, maybe, for a fool, but that, after all, has never yet deterred a man from following his heart's way. He said, taking her hand—dazed because she allowed it; they were in a little twilight recess halfway up the stairs:

"I expect I know mighty little about the sort of life you've led, Miss Abbott. You've told me a lot to-night that somehow I'd not thought of before. I suppose any but a blind man—and I was blind because I'd got stars in my eyes—could have seen that you've been reared very differently to the girls out here—that you've had things soft, that you like them pretty. Your face should have told me, your hands, your clothes. I didn't want to be told, though. Now something's given me the sense to listen, and——"

The recess was twilight; music swung in the air; London, her London, that concatenation of artifices whose color and twinkle had been so clear, faded back and was lost in its own fogs. It was not so much that she listened to what he said as that she was dreaming. She left her hand in his. He went on:

"I suppose I ought to have thought—considered more. It's been so wonderful, meeting you, skating with you, and dancing with you, that you drove sense clean out of my head. You know what I mean? Dozens of fellows must have loved you. You must know?"

She murmured and stared in front of her, cuddling her hand in his. But every trained instinct in her was wrapped about her heart like weeds turning about a drowning swimmer struggling for the surface. Her training was strong; it held her.

He was watching her face. It was flushed and her eyes shone; her lips were a little parted. He wished she

would look at him so that he might read.

"You're thinking?" he whispered.

"I'm not even thinking," she said, troubled. "I can't think."

"Tell me if it's any use my wanting. You have only to say and I'll go back to my farm and never worry you again."

"No! No!" she murmured.

"You don't want me to go?"

The girl put her wisdom quickly against his triumph. She was afraid of what she had said, more than half ready to take it back.

"Don't ask me," she said weakly.

Cornwell released her hand, but only while he leaned forward to speak to the couple who were sitting on the stairs a few steps below them.

"Joe," he said, "don't you feel a big draft there?"

The other man looked round quickly, smiled, and nodded.

"I do think," he said in a slow voice to his partner, "that we ought to move higher up or lower down. There's plenty of room."

They disappeared, good-humored and smiling. Cornwell turned to the girl and laid a hand on her knee. The hand trembled.

"I—I— You've turned my head," he said, looking at it with a little laugh in which joy thrilled. "Did you want them to go?"

Again she replied weakly, conscious that she daren't be alone with him while his eager face blotted out a distant London. He moved closer and took her hands, looking at her as if her face were a feast to him.

"Don't," she said.

"Why?" he asked.

Her mouth went dry. She thought of Willie and a round-the-world honeymoon, of a big dress allowance, her own car, a maid from Paris. Throwing these things pell-mell into the scale against the lone figure of Blair Cornwell, minus all worldly goods, she yet

moved, without knowing it, a little closer to him. She shut her eyes for a moment, the better to envisage Willie and all his possessions.

In that moment Blair kissed her.

"You love me? That's all that matters—and if you don't know it, you can learn from me."

"I'm not going to learn it," she said with a little shiver.

She looked away quickly and pressed her handkerchief to her mouth. She ought not to have let him kiss her; she wouldn't again. It had put her into a tumult that was hard to fight down. If only the music would begin again and her next partner come and claim her! She shivered again. The recess seemed suddenly cold.

"I'm sorry," said Cornwell.

She collected herself.

"You—you ought to be. You took me by surprise——"

"Oh, no," he said positively.

His voice was so quiet that she glanced at him, reassured. He had drawn a little away from her and knitted his hands over his knees. She looked down at them, large, brown, and hard. A remembrance of Willie's hands came to her. She had always hated them.

"You do love me," said Cornwell. "I could make you say so if I tried hard enough, but whether you'd be happy with me, God knows."

"You see as well as I do, Mr. Cornwell, that it would be impossible."

"I see nothing of the kind. It would be beautiful and natural. The life I could offer you is beautiful and natural. There mightn't be frills to it for a good many years. I'm not going to be able to build a house like this for my wife for some time. However, there's little good in discussing——"

"There isn't," she said in a small voice. "I'm glad you see that, glad you understand." And she uttered the conventional womanly, "I'm sorry, very

sorry, you know. I—I shall think of you as one of the nicest people I met while I was out here."

"That's not how I shall think of you."

"How—how shall you think of me?"

He turned to her with flaming eyes.

"Very differently! That cold-storage stuff doesn't cover it at all! Do you want to know how I shall think of you? Because I'll tell you if you do."

"I don't, thanks. Surely it's time for the band——"

"Never mind the band for two more minutes. The band's waiting upon me."

"You!"

"I fixed this rather long interval privately with the conductor. But don't worry. It'll soon be over. When I said there's little good in discussing matters round and round, I didn't mean quite what you did. I meant, discussion doesn't get anywhere. If you came out and saw my place for yourself, you'd have something definite on which to base your decision about me."

"I have made my decision. There wasn't any question——"

"There was, and there still is. I invite you over to-morrow. I'll bring the sleigh for you. It's just a nice little drive between lunch and supper. I'll give you a cup of tea. Now?"

"I don't think I'd better."

"Afraid of yourself?"

"I'm not afraid of myself. There's nothing to be afraid of."

"Oh, yes, there is—from your point of view," said the young man. "But now, Miss Abbott, will you come? You'll see what I offer you, unadorned."

"If I say, 'No?'"

"Why, then—why, then, I'll know I'd better not hang around here any more. I'll clear out for good. There's plenty of work waiting for me on my farm, after all."

"You mean we shan't meet again?"

"Not after the last dance to-night."

She made an involuntary little sound and grew pale. He glanced at her quickly.

"Come!" he said.

"I—I don't think I'd better."

He leaned forward, looking through the stair railing, and waved to the conductor.

"You have half the evening still to consider the invitation. And the last dance is booked with me. Tell me then."

Immediately the music came up to them in a flurry of gay sound.

All the evening, Nance Abbott danced to the rhythm of two questions: "Shall I? Shan't I? Shall I?"

Jealousy pricked her wildly when she saw Cornwell dancing with Leila, although it happened only twice the whole night. And she said to herself:

"It would be interesting. I'd just like to know why he took her out there last year. If I went, I could ask him that—just out of curiosity."

At three o'clock, he stood before her again, as quietly as he had left her and with the same fire in his eyes.

"Ours," he said, "and the last!"

They swung out smoothly on to the now perfect floor. They talked not at all, but on the last beat of the last bar, he said:

"Now!"

The recess in the stairs was empty and he piloted her to it. Every one else was encoring that last dance vociferously. Again they were detached from the laughing crowd. She knew that, had she been wise, she would have danced again with the others, but she did not want to be wise. After all, it would only be once more—after to-night. To-morrow would be the last drive behind the chestnut. After that, she would put on the diamond ring and think of Willie Chase. She sat down, her head bent, and hoped Corn-

well would break the strain of their silence.

The silence continuing, she lifted her head at last and looked at him fearfully. She fought the passion in his eyes for a moment or two. A sobbing gasp tore through her, surprising her. Was she so weak? Her breast heaved and, not knowing that she did it, she leaned toward him and was in his arms. She felt on the brink of a perfectly wonderful happiness and in that moment her courage was equal to grasping it.

"Blair," she stammered, "I—I——"

He searched her face.

"Wait!" he said.

She waited breathlessly.

"Don't promise me anything till to-morrow," said Cornwell. "You're coming to-morrow?"

"Of course I'm coming."

He said very gently:

"Very well, Nance. Leave it till then. I won't make you say anything you'll want to take back five minutes after. To-morrow everything will be quite plain to you. You shall come with your eyes open, and I'll show you just what my wife will share with me. I've always believed that love is the chief thing in marriage; what you believe I'm not quite sure. To-morrow you'll have had time to think. Only tell me just one thing. Now, at this moment—never mind about afterward—do you love me?"

"I love you."

"Then kiss me."

She kissed him. The kiss wiped out all Willie Chase's kisses. The recess was still quiet. Down below, the band repeated the last dance with a tremendous flare of sound.

On her way to bed, when she had helped Leila and Aunt Nella put out all the lights and the last guest had been sped, Nance Abbott shivered again rather forlornly. Excitement had vanished; the house was silent; the

débris of the dance had no glamour; she was tired, sleepy, and cold, longing for bed and solitude. Shut into her room, she undressed swiftly, trembling a little, partly with fatigue, partly with fear at what she had said.

She was not compromised seriously. Choice was surely still open to her. She hadn't said anything she would be ashamed to take back if she wished to take it back to-morrow morning, when lights were gray and not rose colored and no music accompanied love-making like the complement to a song; when she had had time again to think of England and Chase.

Love was all very well. It had been a great thrill and it had left an ache behind. But love with poverty? Could she ever endure it? Was it worth while? Could it make up for solid things like diamonds, furs, and cars that would long outlast beauty and youth? She supposed Willie Chase loved her. He was willing, anyway, to pay any price for her. She opened her jewel case, and her engagement ring flamed at her, flawless and fiery.

Tears dropped down upon it. Hers? How weak she was! She felt wretched and sank into a chair and allowed herself the relief of sobbing.

Mrs. Prospect knocked at the door.

"Can I help you, my dear?"

She wrested her voice back.

"N—no, thank you, Aunt Nella. No one can help me."

She couldn't help putting tragedy into that last cry, and hoped the kind woman outside might not notice it.

Mrs. Prospect rustled down the corridor to her room.

Nance wondered:

"Can a girl who's had all the pretty things face that? Could it be expected?"

She looked at her clothes, tossed in a heap on a chair. Why, that frock, that very "little" one, had cost twenty-five guineas. It was an ordinary price

for a decent frock. Compare it, though, with the dresses worn by the women to-night and it looked absolutely regal.

The wife of a Canadian farmer might dream till her youth and temper had alike withered about twenty-five-guinea frocks. She would probably make her own. She might even knit herself stockings to wear with her home-grown clothes. She would never know the attentions of hairdresser or manicurist. She would get up in the morning very early and——

What *would* she do?

Idly, but resentfully, she began to cast in her mind the day's work of a settler's wife.

She would, possibly, wash clothes!

Nance staggered up from her chair, very weary, and groped for the bed. The candles were flickering out. Thought was unprofitable. As she found the bedside, a second knock fell on the door.

This time it was Leila, speaking in her voice that was mingled sweetness and acidity.

"Can I be of any help to you, Miss Abbott?"

"Thank you, no. I'm in bed."

"Would you mind, then—I'm sorry to trouble you—unhooking the back of my dress, Miss Abbott?"

"Oh, certainly, Miss Dobson."

Leila came in, carrying a candle and saying:

"You will call me Leila, won't you? I thought perhaps I could help you—that we could exchange services. Thank you *so* much. You must hate touching my ugly old frock. Beside yours, of course, it looked just awful. You were quite the prettiest girl in the room with your lovely clothes."

"It's very kind of you to say so."

"It's true, and doesn't Blair Cornwell dance divinely?"

"He does indeed."

"Is he taking you to see his place?"

"What makes you ask?"

"Oh, I thought perhaps he'd asked you."

Again it was a flash of jealousy that made Nance satisfy the other girl's curiosity.

"I am going. He asked me to go to-morrow."

Moving toward the door, Leila laughed.

"Why do you laugh?"

"You'll look so incongruous there. You're out of the picture altogether."

She went out, snapping the door shut as if she were snapping her lips close, too.

CHAPTER II.

The burden of her wretched irresolution lay upon Nance Abbott through her brief dreams and weighted her when she awoke late the next morning. Knowing what she had to say to him, she yet debated miserably if and how she should say it. More than one empty-pocketed and hot-hearted young man with whom she had trifled during a London season had heaped reproaches upon her heartlessness; indeed, she had often wondered a little, herself, after some such scene of storm—flattering to her vanity—whence she had acquired her cool indifference to flesh and blood, her keen delight in the power of a purse. But now she had a heart. It had been discovered by this young prospector, questing for such gold, and she could no more deny it.

She was nervous of an impending hurricane.

Yet, womanishly, when she looked in her glass, saw herself pale, she made haste to be beautiful for Cornwell. She dared not love, but she would dazzle him. That vanity she could not help. With much pains and attention, she pulled and patted, brushed and twirled her hair into sleek contour; reddened her lips and rubbed into her cheeks vigorously a pink-toned cream. She

did not yet use rouge, and that was about all the difference in toilet lore as used by her and by her mother, who, was fifty in years and of immemorial age in heart.

Willie Chase stared at her from his morocco frame, watching all these little preparations with a knowing air. He knew them well—these pains taken to delight, his half smile said. His gaze seemed to be fixed upon the empty third finger of her left hand, rubbing the cream into her cheek. She frowned and her flesh crept.

An idea came, suggested by Willie's lynx eye.

"My ring!" she thought, on the inspiration.

She would put it on. At Cornwell's house, she would, of course, remove her gloves to make tea; he was probably the kind of man who wanted a woman guest to make tea. It would seem—so natural. He would see the ring, and it would explain everything which she could then leave unsaid. There would be something of a scene, of course, but she would not be obliged, exactly, to tell him herself.

She put on the ring, put on Willie's sable cap, swung her fur coat over her arm, and went down to lunch.

The Prospects and Leila were already at the table.

"Not tired, love?" asked Aunt Nella. "You look quite fresh—wonderful for a London girl after a dance. But *we've* done that here. We've made you as strong as a pony. Are you skating, then, this afternoon, my dear?"

Her gaze fell to the flashing ring and fastened there.

"Mr. Cornwell is coming to drive me out to his farm."

Every one looked at her frankly.

"Don't be unkind to him," said Aunt Nella, adopting a light tone. "I'm very fond of Blair. He's a good boy, and he deserves to be very happy."

"I'm sure I hope he will be, my dear auntie."

"What a lovely ring!" said Leila Dobson, in a voice that gloated almost unctuously. "It must have cost a fortune. It must have cost enough to start a young man on a little farm out here. How funny it must feel to wear all that round your finger! It looks like an engagement ring, Miss Abbott."

"It is my niece's engagement ring," said Mrs. Prospect.

"Oh, I didn't know you were formally engaged, Miss Abbott. You've not worn it here before, have you?"

"Haven't I?"

She was not going to tell Leila when she had taken it off. On the sleigh, when Blair had met her at the station because the Prospects' horse had fallen lame, beneath the bear-skin rug, she had smuggled off the ring, impelled by the stupid wish that this unusual-looking young man should think her free. Five minutes after his first greeting, her left third finger had been ringless.

She had never lived a month yet, since her coming-out dance, without a love affair in progress. It would have been dull here, in spite of the Prospects' kindness, if—if there hadn't been any one else— Just a little flirtation with a new type of man—passing the time.

Her hands were cold; the palms were clammy; she felt a fluttering at wrists and throat; her heart would not beat evenly. She looked out of the frosted windows at a day as bright as her diamonds.

"It will be lovely this afternoon."

Her uncle, having served her, rose slowly.

"You'll excuse me, Nance, if I have a pipe? I've finished lunch and I'm going out directly."

Without looking at her, he walked out to the hall and stood lighting his pipe, his back to the open dining-room door. The girl glanced after him

quickly. He was broad and burly, and how crudely simple! Puritanical in his disapproval of her! She understood why her mother always jeered about her sister's husband. She supposed he was thinking she had behaved badly.

Aunt Nella pressed her to eat, most kindly.

Food seemed choking and dust dry. She drank some cider and went to put her shivering hands on the hot pipes. In the hall, a log fire burned, but her uncle stood before it smoking.

Sleigh bells outside!

She saw, outside the window, the chestnut draw up, on fire with his own speed, angered at stopping. He threw his head up and down till all his bells rang, and beat the frozen snow with his forefoot. But he stood like a rock, while his master sprang out and knocked at the door.

"You won't keep Blair waiting, Nance?" said Mrs. Prospect slowly. "That horse will get cold." Advancing toward the girl, she kissed her. "Why haven't you the courage to do as I did?" she whispered. "I've never regretted it once."

Nance did not reply. The kind woman, had she but guessed it, only heightened the fear in her soul. They would all press her into a bondage unsweetened by the very honey of her life. Marriage must be sugared. Nodding and smiling, she tied the flaps of her cap over her ears.

Cornwell came in, fresh and brisk from the cold, weather-beaten and joyous. The confidence about him stiffened her defenses. She had both gloves on before he had greeted her aunt and turned to take her hand.

Tucked under the rugs, while the sleigh skimmed the snow smoothly, she heard the chestnut's hoofbeats like a refrain, "This-is-good-by! This-is-good-by!" over and over.

Cornwell drove superbly, and with faith. He did not harry the chestnut

devil with suspicions of his designs, but put in him a trust to which the horse rose surely. Nance saw it, and quailed. Faith was a horrible thing to fight. People were so simple out here. Here was a man who trusted his horse and trusted a girl. People had no right to be so simple.

"Are you comfortable?" he was asking. "You're not cold? Not tired? I'm so happy to be taking you to look at my place. You don't know how happy I am. Chiefly, perhaps, because something tells me you wouldn't come if you weren't going to—weren't going to tell me you like it. Put it like that for the present. I'm right?"

She asked with a weak laugh:

"Does 'something' always tell the truth?"

"Generally."

Trusting the chestnut, he was able to steal attention to look at her. She was pink now with their flight through the frost, and the two brown waves of hair which emerged from the two sable ear flaps were adorable.

"I haven't slept," he confessed. "I've thought of you all night. That is, during as much of the night as there was left. I didn't get home till after four."

"I've only just got up."

"Ah, I got up at six. There was the stock to be fed. You can't keep 'em waiting."

"Must you do it yourself?"

"Or see it done. It comes to the same thing so far as sleep is concerned. But there's a difference between a great, rough man and a lady, isn't there?"

"Yes. I—I should hate to get up at six."

"Well, you'd never have to—"

To stop his ingenuous forecast of an impossible future, she said hurriedly:

"What's the summer like out here?"

He launched into that with enthusiasm. In summertime, even *she* would want to be up early. He described the

prairie at dawn, and the long rides, and the distance of his sheep run, talking till the smokestacks of a low, rough-cast building came into sight. Then, pointing with his whip, he said simply: "That's home."

She had nothing to say. The smokestacks left her cold. It was uglier than she had thought, and intolerably bleak. Cattle yards flanked the house on three sides, though in front was an attempt at a garden, now devastated by frost. From outhouses came an incessant lowing. A half-breed, the only sign of human life about the place, was waiting to take the horse.

Eagerly the young man lifted the girl out. She was so pink and soft, furry and scented, that he wanted to kiss her then and there, and he looked it. He restrained himself with a little humorous smile and piloted her indoors. Through the front door, they walked straight into the living room, where a great fire roared in welcome and a rough dog, rising up, trotted forward with much tail wagging.

Cornwell shut the door.

"Now," he said, rather beseechingly, "here we are!"

He was begging her to tolerate, even to admire. She could find nothing to say, except, "What a lovely fire!" and escape to it, making a business of warming her feet.

He stood looking at her.

She loosened her coat, saying:

"I—I'm not really cold. What a fine skin!"

"Shot him myself—one of the biggest grizzlies I've seen. Excuse me one moment, Miss Abbott."

He disappeared into an inner room and she heard him moving about. A kettle was singing somewhere. He came out saying:

"I think it's all tidy. You'd like to go and leave your things. You'll take that hat off, won't you? Please. I'd

love you to pour out tea with your hat off."

She passed him while he held open the door for her.

"There's hot water for your hands if you want it," he said, smiling. He *was* happy!

She heard him now, moving about the living room, doing something with crockery. Standing in the center of the bedroom, she looked around. The purring came from a tiny kettle on a small oilstove in one corner. There was a bed, a seat that had obviously died as a couple of whisky cases and risen again as a kind of ottoman, some crockery that didn't match, and what purported to be a dressing table and mirror.

This was Cornwell's bedroom. There was only one. This was what he would offer to her. Imagine it strewn with twenty-five-guinea trousseau frocks, tortoise-shell brushes, and vanity pots and puff bowls and bath salts!

She wanted to give an unhappy, hysterical shriek of laughter and pressed her handkerchief to her mouth. She mustn't laugh. If she could laugh, she could cry, and probably would. It would be terrible to cry merely for the finish of a unique flirtation.

She tossed her furs on the bed. Her left hand, now gloveless, felt naked and ashamed, with its revealed secret. She thrust both her hands into the pockets of her short skirt and sauntered out, to find Cornwell setting tea.

"You would do this better than I," he said, gazing at her as she stood in the doorway.

"I've never done it in my life," she answered.

"No, I suppose not. It seems funny, that. Getting tea isn't heavy work, though, is it? It's ready now, except the brew. We'll have to wait a moment for that. Let me show you the room while it's drawing. See here—this chest. I bought it, mostly in bits,

in Calgary one day. I tinkered it up in the evenings. One wants something to do in the evenings when there's only the dog to talk to. This table I made myself, and I put up those window curtains—sewed the frill—what's it called?—valance?—and all that. I've liked doing it. There's something about knocking together your own home, getting your own things. Nothing's the same as your own. Of course, this looks a poor place to you; to me it's quite a little model—till I come out, say, to Mrs. Prospect's place and see what money can really do. However, that's all to come. I bought those queer things there on the wall from an Indian. They're supposed to be charms. I'm not—not boring you?"

"I'm so very interested. Yes, really. Do—do go on telling me."

"No. We're going to talk about ourselves, aren't we? And there—see—the tea's quite ready now. Will you sit in this chair?"

She took the best chair before the table, and he sat close at her right hand. She was shaking all over. Soon her hands must both leave their hiding places. In the bedroom, she had blessed modern pockets. Now she thought that if only her dressmaker hadn't seen fit to order them, the disclosure would already have been made. All would have been over. The ring would have given up her secret.

She lifted the teapot with her right hand and poured tea into the two cups; milked and sugared them still with her right hand. He was watching, breathless, a smile on his face.

"I thought of it last night," he said, "you sitting here, pouring tea. You do it so prettily. Never, to my mind, does a sweet girl look so sweet. Now you must put the water in. Shall I hold the kettle for you?"

She made bravely her resolution to take the plunge, to do something that would use both hands. She gasped:

"No, sit still. I'm in my element, you know, tea making. I'll do it all, thanks."

Crossing to the fire, she took the kettle, hissing, from the trivet.

Her eyes upon the task, she accomplished it. But there had crept into the air some new quality that moved round her. Returning to the fire, she replaced the kettle and went back once more to the table.

Cornwell had risen and was standing still as a forest tree under a stroke of tropic heat.

She lifted her eyes to him sullenly. The soft lines had been frightened out of her face, and it had grown hard. She looked older.

They looked at each other for some time in silence. Then, reaching out, he caught her left hand and held her fettered.

"Eh?" he said in a soft voice, like a man without breath.

She did not reply, but moved her tongue tip across her lips.

"What's this?" he asked, shaking her arm.

She managed to say with nonchalance:

"What is—what?"

"This ring."

She replied steadily, the hour upon her:

"That is my engagement ring. I am engaged to be married."

"Since when?"

She named the date hardily. It was five months ago.

"Long before you met me?" he said.

"Before I met you, yes."

"Your aunt know?"

"Yes."

"You've been playing with me? It's your choice in amusements?"

"I've not. I don't know what you mean. Last night I—I told you how sorry I was."

"Your sorrow is most kind. It does me good. May I know the name of the winner?"

"Mr. William Chase."

"Thanks. I'm no wiser. I thought, maybe, you were doing something brilliant. Rich, I suppose?"

"Yes."

"How much?"

"T-t-twelve thousand."

"A year?"

"A year."

"My God! Blair Cornwell, in what he stands up in, against twelve thousand a year! H'm! I've had a cheek!"

She did not reply.

"When are you to be married?"

He saw her blench. She shivered. A virgin horror made her face young again. With a sudden exclamation, he would have moved close to her, but she wrenched her hand away and, wheeling from him, crossed to the fire. She presented to him a slim back and bent head. He followed and looked into her face.

"Don't!" she choked.

Light filled his eyes.

"Here, look at me, Nance! You see me—you see what I have to offer. There's love as well—worship. You'd be worshiped. You'd be queen of me and all I've got, instead of a rich man's bondwoman. You're more than half inclined to take it, aren't you? Look at me, Nance, and say!"

"I've said! I've said!" she exclaimed wildly.

"But wouldn't you like to unsay? If I helped you to it? Look! Let me take it out of your hands. Let——"

"No! No!"

"You're a girl to stick to a bargain? Is that it? But not if the bargain's been driven too hard! Besides, all's fair here. I'm going to get you if I can. Love's like war—love is war. All is fair, Nance. And last night you told me——"

"I don't want to remember."

"Do you suppose I'll ever forget?"

"You must."

"I won't. If he can't keep you, let him lose you. A man wins on his merits in love. It's all I ask—to stand on my merits. By God, it's all I have to stand on! Look at me, Nance, just once, and say again what you said last night."

"Don't touch me!"

"I won't touch you. Can't you say it—what you said last night?"

"I must have been mad."

"You were sane. It was a sane moment in your little petted, gilded life."

"I could never marry you, Mr. Cornwell."

"Why? What are you afraid of?"

She looked around and answered with an expressive shudder:

"All this! Everything!"

Cornwell fell back a pace, regarding her. Contempt crossed the passion in his face.

"You're not a woman," he said slowly. "You're just a parasite. Just a butterfly thing with wings that carry you where you scheme. You've little heart, but your head! What a head you've got!"

She jerked out, twisting round her finger Willie Chase's ring, as if she clung to it for safety:

"A girl can't afford not to think of all these things. I know when I get back and settled down again, I'll be as happy as I was before."

"Were you ever really happy before last night?"

"Yes," she cried defiantly.

"Then you're not going the way to be happy again. When I spoke of your wedding, you trembled. Was that happiness? What kind of anticipation was it?"

Again she did not reply.

"You'll have to live with him, sleeping and waking, mind. You'll be his wife. He'll probably try you hard."

"I know quite well what I'm doing."

"Do you? You'll have his children."

"I won't have you talking to me like

this!" she cried out in a high fever of resistance.

"Your mind is made up?"

"I have told you so. I couldn't—I couldn't even contemplate—such things as these!"

Again she looked around her, and he saw the appallment in her eyes intensify. It struck him to the heart, and he saw her, very plainly, as she was—a woman pampered into servitude till naught else but servitude was possible to her. He was pitiful, but wildly angry.

He said, with a frankness which she had learned to consider brutal:

"Very well. So be it. But he'll make your flesh creep far more than the mention of his name made it creep just now. Don't deceive yourself. You've been trained to a hair to play on men and prey on men, but you don't know what you rouse—yet. No, but you will know. I'm a man and I know men better than you. It's hell to marry a man you don't love. A woman hasn't so many ways of loving as a man. You women love—or you don't. Well. You're going to be very sorry for yourself before life and your husband have done with you. He's older than you, I suppose—a lot? Young men haven't made twelve thousand a year. Haven't you thought to yourself what it all means? Have you reckoned up with yourself what *you'll* pay against what *he'll* pay?"

She put her hands to her ears and ran past him into the bedroom; she slammed the door behind her, put her back against it, and stood. It was all horrible! She couldn't hear more, wouldn't stay. She caught sight in the glass of her face with a wild red spot on either cheek, and her quick heaving breast. How dared he disturb her so? Moving at last from the door, she began to put on her furs. She would go home.

She was dependent on him to take her, though.

She came out of the bedroom with her head up.

Cornwell was by the fire.

Coming forward, he said in an easy voice:

"We've been talking so hard that you haven't had tea yet. Do sit down and drink it and eat a hot scone. I made the scones myself this morning in your honor. Yes, I did. I'm a great cook. Now, sit down."

"I want to go home, please."

"My horse isn't rested enough yet. It was eighteen miles there and back and he isn't a slow traveler. Sit down, if you please."

She sat, against her will; saw him pour away their cups of cold tea and make a fresh brew. All the while, he talked. She watched his face, hard, pale, and serious. What was he thinking? Would he presently go back to the theme to which she dared not listen? When would the chestnut be ready to take her back at his flying trot over the nine miles of snow to the genial safety of Aunt Nella's house?

"Now a scone," said Cornwell, lifting the hot plate from the hearth.

She took one.

"You must have one, too," she said.

Eating was an occupation and a sort of sedative to temper. Let him eat and he would not—

Grimly he smiled, reading her, as he selected a scone.

"Now I'm harmless, Miss Abbott. Even colonial farmers don't talk to a lady with their mouths full."

She smiled feebly, her heart thudding against her breast. If the intolerable afternoon would only wear away!

She had received a letter from her mother that morning, suggestive of trousseau plans. Trying to fix her mind on it, with its recall home, she found her mind stupid, unreceptive. As if chiffons mattered nothing in the

world, her mind refused to be bewitched by them.

They could not keep up a conversation. Silences came heavily between them. At last Cornwell said:

"I think we might go now," and, going to the door, uttered a mighty holloa.

The half-breed appeared from some outbuilding, slouching through the cold.

"Horse, Jack!" Cornwell ordered shortly.

When the door was shut again, they were alone for the last few minutes. Again silence fell. It was like an infinite good-by. Neither spoke. The man took his heavy coat down from its peg, pulled on his fur gauntlets, and looked to see that the girl was accoutred against the perishing weather.

Sleighbells outside!

She heard them differently now. They had lost their gladness. Cornwell stood looking at her quietly and attentively as a man wishing to memorize a picture. A gulp in her throat gave her a frenzied fight against emotion. Between the flaps of her fur cap, her pale face looked peaked. Its white-velvet fullness had dwindled a little.

"Here we are!" said Cornwell in an emotionless voice.

They went out to the sleigh. Again she was tucked under the rugs with the same minute care, ready to cry at his ministrations.

"You're not looking yourself," he said shortly.

"I'm tired after the dance."

He got in beside her and they were away. Their shoulders nearly touched. She snuggled down, down, under the rugs, with bent head. All her limbs ached and an incomprehensible weariness was upon her. Staleness—that was it. She felt stale.

The chestnut trotted the nine miles in under three-quarters of an hour.

"You're coming in?" she uttered mechanically as the horse drew up, pleased and smoking, before the Prospects' porch. It was already half dark, and a moon was coming up over the windless tracts about them.

"I'm not coming, thanks. I shan't come again while you are here."

"Oh—I'm sorry. I'm very sorry."

He helped her out, receiving her amends without reply.

"I wish you'd come in," she said weakly.

He got back into the sleigh.

"Good afternoon, Miss Abbott. My best wishes. Your visit has been a pleasure."

She was standing alone, looking into the gray-white twilight after the homeward-flying sleigh.

The world was forlorn. It's coldness and huge spaces, looked upon so blankly by that moon, oppressed her. London would be warm now, preparing for its evening revels. The music of the streets—the taxis, omnibuses, flower criers', news venders' calls—would be playing. Oh, the ceaseless music of the London streets!

Willie Chase would have been coming round to the Regent's Park house, in his car, to take her out to dine wherever she wished to go; to a theater after, if she felt so inclined. Powdered, scented, manicured, silk all through from head to heel, she would go out and taste of luxury.

Why had she come here—here to this death-cold, primitive place where one's body positively shrank from the absolutely essential woollen underclothing?

"Talk of making one's flesh creep!" she thought, angrily shaking her sensitive body in the cling of that abominated wool. "I'd like to know what does it worse than this? And if I lived here— Ugh!"

The sleigh was out of sight and two tears rolled down her cheeks.

The front door flew open, and Leila stood framed. She gushed hospitably:

"Oh, Miss Abbott, *come in!* You'll freeze, standing there. Are you watching Mr. Cornwell drive away? It looks romantic, that moon and all. *Come in.*"

Nance went straight in and up the stairs to her bedroom. Cushions and comfort again, thank God! Furniture that wasn't whisky cases! Leila's voice at the door asked:

"Did you have an interesting afternoon?"

Leila had followed her in. Wheeling about, Nance met the inquiry of those eyes, large, light, and round.

"A very interesting visit indeed."

"I'm glad," said Leila, dropping her gaze.

The wish to know tore through Nance again. She didn't want the man. No. She had made that plain. But was Leila to have him? That was another matter.

Coldly and clearly she asked:

"Did he ask you to go and see his place because he wanted *you* to marry him last year?"

Two seconds Leila hesitated. She was thinking:

"Shall I—shan't I—tell the truth?"

Then she told it reluctantly, as the wiser thing to do, not knowing how much the other already knew. She said:

"N—no. I asked him to drive me over, to show me——"

Her voice trailed off; she looked blindly into a vague distance.

"Oh!" said Nance.

"Did he ask you to go and see his place because he wanted *you* to marry him, this year?" said Leila.

That wretched desire of one vain woman for triumph over another and hostile one roused Nance's reply.

"He did," she answered calmly.

Leila's winter smile confirmed with its frost the stupid, subtle antagonism between them.

CHAPTER III.

It was as if he had dropped right through and out of her life. He came no more to the Prospects' ranch. She skated all alone up the river in his direction more than once, but never did she see the dark figure buoyantly flying to meet her or the chestnut outlined like a flame against the white, swinging the sleigh like a featherweight over the snow. She wrote to Willie Chase, in reply to his fervent, incessant letters:

In a week from the time you have this, I shall be home. It is sweet of you to give a dinner to celebrate my return. Yes, the Savoy will do as well as anywhere else, won't it? And the Gayety after, yes.

She did not again remove the ring. In its rightful place, it bolstered her shrinking resolution. Whenever her heart was faint, she looked at it, and it winked back and said, "I cost four hundred guineas." She packed her trunks, sighing, knowing not why. Perhaps it was that during those last days Canada shook herself from her ice-bound sleep and warmed with the dawn of spring morning. She saw the prairie awaking and the locked river begin to burble and run; and the magic life of it stole to her blood, who was at the magic hour of her own life. Young and untired, she looked with wistful eyes at spring. The day that saw her board the Eastbound express wore an enchanted smile. Canada was not sorry at her going. Canada parted from her nonchalantly. It was she who was forlorn, whose very heartstrings vibrated to the untranslated call.

The long, monotonous rail journey tired her out. She went on board the great ship that would take her to Willie at the earliest possible moment, turned into her berth, regardless of the daylight, and slept.

When she awoke, Canada was far astern. The Atlantic heaved and billowed about her.

She sat on deck all day, fur wrapped. There was a millionaire aboard who was fascinated by her face, and who, it turned out, knew Willie Chase. When he discovered how matters lay, he hardly left her. He must take care of her, he affirmed, for Chase, an awfully good fellow. He expatiated upon Willie with some guile and many evasions, but she guessed that their acquaintanceship was slight.

However, one must have some one to carry one's cushions, with whom to linger through the day. She must, in short, have a man, looking into whose eyes she might see her own reflection.

There was, after all, the ring. She was scrupulously honest. It winked at the millionaire, saying, "She is mine." She displayed it callously. Any hurt he might take was his own affair.

On the third day out, the calamity fell.

They were at lunch, and the weather was fair. The millionaire sat at her table. It was an understood thing now, and, anyway, it would be her last fling, her farewell flirtation; for she had a notion that when Willie had put on another ring to join that diamond circle, he wouldn't be so easy, so manageable.

She was leaning toward the man over the table, toying with the little pearl necklace half hidden under her filmy blouse. She was all in white—thick serge skirt, heavy sweater, buckskin shoes, silk stockings, all white save the little scarlet hat firmly pulled down and well aslant over her brown hair. She was neither happy nor unhappy, playing the only game that she knew how to play to real perfection. Their talk was full of the artful undercurrents that bring the whirlpools of danger into the game. Into it there crashed a dull, reverberating blow that made the ship stop as if dead in her tracks, for one nearly imperceptible moment, and then

shudder on, slowly, like a monster in a vital struggle.

The saloon was instantly ablaze with fear, and questions were repeated over and over incoherently. A crowded maze of white-faced women clinging to their men brought swift confusion. Stewards begged all to keep their seats, but their appeals were useless.

Nance Abbott, in that moment, knew herself completely alone.

She looked into the eyes of the man opposite; her image was no longer there. They were quiet, opaque, but she read the fear that glazed them. Trained to a hair in the social laws as he was, which would he put first, himself or her, if the last chance came?

For no reason, there slid into her mind a text which a religious nurse had impressed upon her in childhood: "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."

He was mortally afraid.

But what *had* happened?

She said to him from a dry mouth: "What is it?"

He answered in a voice she did not know:

"We—I expect—we're torpedoed. Those cursed Germans——"

His words tailed off.

Some one shrieked rather than said:

"What are we staying here for, to drown like rats? We ought to be getting on life belts!"

A steward who had darted above and down again was heard saying confidentially to some one else, in a sudden lull:

"She took it smack in the engine room. My God!"

Again that dull crash.

"They've sent us another!" cried a man shrilly.

"And we—we're carrying munitions!" shrieked a fear-ridden voice.

It was the millionaire.

A gunshot boomed, singly.

The second officer came down the stair, brisk and grim:

"Every one on deck instantly, with lifebelts. No panic, please. Gentlemen, keep order."

He stood halfway down the stair, letting people pass him in file, assailed with questions, but answering none.

Nance Abbott found herself on deck. She had been to her cabin, fetched her lifebelt, and some one had helped her to put it on. It was not the millionnaire.

Surely in that calm sea they were not going to die?

She took in all around her with a detachment that did not seem in the least extraordinary. Women were in men's arms, crying; men were grave, tense. In the forepart of the ship, which was surely dipping a little, she saw, huddled and swaying, dark masses, from which now and again uncontrolled screams rose. She felt a faint pity for that herd in the steerage. She saw ships' officers moving among them, marshaling them.

To the man nearest her, who had helped her with her lifebelt, she said:

"They've sent for help?"

He replied shortly:

"Wireless is gone."

"Gone!"

"The submarine came up and fired a shot. Didn't you hear it, soon after the second torpedo? That shot has—has done for us."

"Oh, it can't be—as bad—as that!"

"These things happen."

They stood there, alert, trembling. Some one shouted:

"Where are the boats?"

They got the news around after what seemed an interminable time. The captain was shouting on the bridge. They were going—there was probably time—to make for the nearest land. Meanwhile, every one must stay on deck and maintain perfect order.

"He doesn't know how quick the

end's coming," said the man near Nance. "We're all to be ready for the boats any minute. Have a cigarette, won't you? Even that is something to do."

She stood there, smoking with him, but her cigarette went out three times. He pretended not to notice it, just handing her a match without comment when she asked. She thought:

"Men are brave!"

If only that red-brown, turbulent face, those wide shoulders, were at her side now! She might have been at this moment at his side, back in the spring land. She drew through cold lips at the cigarette.

The ship had altered her course and plunged on slowly. The battle in the engine room could be heard, and it seemed—or was it fancy?—that she was lower in the water. Nance asked her neighbor:

"The second torpedo—where did it strike?"

He answered, "Forward," in a quiet monotone.

"Shall we—shall we sink?"

"Oh, that would probably take a long time—perhaps days. There are watertight doors, you know—all that."

"You're trying to comfort me."

"Poor girl! You want some comfort, don't you?"

She cried a little.

"You're alone?"

She nodded.

He said: "Well, if the need comes, stick to me. I'll try to shove you through if there's any jamming. But it's always women first at the boats, anyway."

"Where are we going?"

"I don't know my geography. The captain's got some plan."

The ship labored on her way till nearly nightfall, with all her human freight still aboard. There was as yet no land in sight, and dusk was softening the sky. There cut suddenly

through the air a stentorian call from the bridge; a flurry of bells whirled in the engine room; the liner veered part round, clumsy, laggardly, crippled; and a great grinding under her keel preceded all cessation of movement, save horrible, shaking plunges as if she panted to free herself from some hidden foe.

"Now," said the man near Nance, "we're on the rocks. I don't know where, but—but—now we're done. It'll be the devil to launch the boats. The ship's piled up on the rocks, and they'll never get her off, and she wouldn't float ten minutes if they did."

She drew, shaking, at her sixth cigarette.

"Won't burn," she jerked out.

He took it from her lips.

"I don't suppose it will," he said, queerly smiling. "Put on that big coat. You hear what's happening? Now, women first."

A crowd surged about her. She didn't see him again.

It seemed to her that the confusion of hell had reigned for a long while, but it was only a matter of minutes. She saw, aghast and shrinking, two boatloads of women, grinding upon a rock, sink.

Black forms struggled frenziedly in the water. There was a rush to launch the boats on the other side, with the hope of clearing the danger. Nance stood still, with her hands pressed to her face. Better to drown here, on the ship, than to be flung out there! The water was no longer sunny. It was dark. Oh, to be drowned in the twilight sea after the sun went down! The sounds around her—the prayers and crying, the sharp orders—rattled against her ears. It was eternity while the ship grated, grated with the noise of a vast, breaking rasp, a crackling like the crunch of giant bones.

It was perhaps her turn for a boat and they would *make* her go.

She looked out from behind her fingers and saw beside her a red-brown face, untamed by the nearness of death, wide shoulders, steady eyes. She felt a strong hand close about her arm.

He was dripping wet.

He said in an ordinary voice:

"Here you are."

She cast herself upon his breast and wept.

She gasped: "You! How— Where— Why—"

"I swam along from the steerage. That's where I'm traveling, not being a millionaire, you know. I was looking for you."

"How did you find me?"

"I shinned up a rope."

She clung to him, mad with terror and gratitude and joy. Somehow she was safe. That feeling came to her, immense in its awful relief. Drowning cries beat only vaguely in her ears, and the horrible pandemonium receded.

"You'll have to go in the next boat," said Cornwell.

"And you?"

"I shall take my turn with the men. Don't you worry about us."

"I'm afraid to go in a boat."

"That doesn't matter. You have to go."

"Must I?"

"You must. There! They're launching a boat forward. Come! Run!"

They swept along the deck in the surge of a panic-stricken *mêlée*. Cornwell kept his arm around her, guarding her from buffeting, and she clung to his coat.

She saw the boat. Women were being herded into it. What a load! What a cockleshell! Then they would be swung out, out, from those high davits, into the twilight water, murky and gray. Cornwell dragged her forward.

"Now!" he said. "My God! *What's that?*"

A rumble seemed to echo through the deck under their very feet—a blast—an

explosion; a flame of fire rose and ran from stern to amidship. The air was thick with tossing fragments; in the churned water the few boats that were already launched were swamped, hurled like atoms into doom. A vast upheaval flung man and girl off their feet, beat and bruised them upon the deck. A whirling spar hit Nance like a flail. She heard Cornwell say, "Hide your eyes!" and she hid them against him, in a vortex of terror. They seemed to go sliding, sliding—

Smoke; fiery smells; cries! And they rolled and slid with a sickening motion, as if sinking, sinking, to some bottomless place of groans and fear. The tearing grind of wood and iron sawing on rock helplessly went monotonously on.

Cornwell's hand on the back of her head pressed her face into his wet shoulder, and his voice whispered in her ear now and again:

"Don't look! Don't look!"

At last it seemed to her that there was silence, and that they were afloat again upon the sea, moving a little, almost imperceptibly, as if straying negligently with a tide. A wind had risen and rocked them.

She began to cast about in her mind, still blind against that wet coat, where she was. She was sitting on some part of the deck with Cornwell, her back against some kind of wall, tightly held in his arms. And the crying and shrieking, the terrible prayers, had ceased.

Was there peace upon this awful sea?

She made a movement of resistance, to lift her head, and he moved his hand.

"It's all over now," he said quietly. "Look, if you must."

Afraid to look, and yet impelled, she raised her head. The sea was gray, and night was coming down fast. They were floating without aim, just rocked along by play of wind and tide. And was this the ship, this broken hulk, all aslant and asway?

"It—it's broken!" she cried sharply.

"There's only this left," said Cornwell. "The explosion of munitions broke her in two amidships. She just blew up and sank—all but this. Here's the forepart, and we're on it."

"But we were torpedoed?"

"Yes, we've got a bad hole in us. We won't float forever."

His tone was grim. She cried and clung to him, trembling.

"That—that last boatload?"

"Don't talk about it!" he ordered, with a faraway look into horror.

"I was to have been in it!"

He wrapped his arms about her fiercely.

"Thank God you're here with me!"

"Safe with you."

"I don't know about safe. Don't count on that. But I can help you to drown presently, if drown we must. That's why I came to you. It'll be better than—than—what happened to that boat."

She was looking down into the dark sea, and she saw dimly, in the veil of dusk, pitiful things that filled her with despair. She covered her face with her hands.

For a long while, it seemed, they sat there, too beaten to move.

"No one except us?" she asked presently, lifting her eyes to him.

"No one except us."

"What shall we do?"

"Hope to keep afloat till we're picked off."

"We are sure to be saved?"

"We'll talk about that, and I'll tell you the pros and cons after I've fed you and found you quarters for the night."

"On this wreck?"

"There are some steerage cabins left, and there's food enough in the storage pantry to last us till a gray and honorable old age, if we're spared for it."

"Are we going to the steerage?"

"I don't think it'll hurt you to see

how less lucky people travel. Besides, look across there and down."

Obeying him, holding his hand, she leaned out and looked over the ragged, slanting edges where the great ship had burst asunder. It was like looking over the heave of a precipice into a yawning mouth filled with sucking, gray, slithery waves. She sank down again, dismayed.

"Come," he said. "It won't be so bad where the human cattle have traveled. They'd be there still, some of them, if they hadn't trusted to the boats or thrown themselves into the water like stampeding bullocks. They've no control; that's the worst. Come."

When she had followed him over the difficulty of countless barriers, crawling across a surface of deck sloped at a perilous angle, into the strange and dirty place wherein her dainty feet had never before been set, she was obedient. It was as if, without volition, she surrendered herself to his will. She followed him to a littered place verily carpeted with smashed crockery, but here and there were a cup, a saucer, a heap of plates, unbroken. They were dirty, though.

"Will you wash those?" Cornwell asked, pointing to them. "There is the sink."

She hastened to obey.

The grease of the sink! The smell and slime of it! She thought it horrible, even in her emergency; even though it was the fresh grease of the day's dinner, and the stench was wholesome, not putrid. Cornwell, making for the pantry, heard her tiny reproaches, and answered calmly over his shoulder:

"That sink's been scrubbed down and disinfected daily. It won't hurt you."

She washed and dried cups and plates and stood looking around, with the towel dangling in her white hand. On the third finger Willie's diamonds

flashed in irony. If he could see her now! Cornwell, coming out of the pantry with food, surveyed her.

"Will you eat in the open air?" he asked. "Or will you set the table in there?"

He nodded toward a door. She went and looked in, sniffing doubtfully.

"I've eaten there every day since we sailed," he told her. "It's not so bad. One adapts oneself. You, now—can't you imagine this is a picnic—a fashionable picnic, all the smarter for being *outré*? Try it."

She elected to eat in there, to set the table with coarse and ugly knives and forks, rather than look again just then at the gray sea which had so lately swallowed the dead with such horrid appetite. Cornwell came and helped her with a little advice, and only that.

"For," said he, "I'd rather like a change, you know. You've noticed, perhaps, that I'm damp?"

He went, leaving her alone, and she was afraid. She wouldn't be alone! Supposing, while he was in his cabin, the wreck foundered? She ran out and down the gangway to his door.

She called in a high voice:

"I'm standing outside. I'm going to stay here till you're ready. Talk to me."

He replied instantly and was only a few minutes over his changing. Coming out, he found her leaning against the wall, her eyes big, every nerve astretch, pale as a ghost under the crumpled red hat. He took her arm.

"You're not fit to be left for a moment," he said very gently. "I don't want to leave you. You can guess that? I wish I had the right—I wish I were the man who put this on your finger. Under such circumstances, I'd take the right." He looked hard and hostilely at the engagement ring, not relinquishing her arm.

The stove was still alight in the kitchen. Through all the storm, un-

abated, it had burned steadily on. Cornwell shoveled on more coal.

"Coffee!" he said. "That's the thing for you. Sit still and see me make it."

She watched him making coffee, opening the tin of condensed milk, refilling a sugar basin, cooking potatoes. He was cheery, careful in his words, too. But all the while she who watched saw the strain behind—saw him stop and listen, when he thought himself unobserved, to the suck-suck of the sea; saw the grim set of his face when the wreck lurched a little forward. He expected doom, doom in that sea of inky night.

She tried to ask him, and he said:

"No talk till you've eaten."

He sat very close at her right hand, as he had done at his own tea table on that unforgotten day. He served her coffee, cold salt meat, and potatoes and margarine, saying:

"You won't expect an orchestrated six-course dinner this trip, will you?"

She tried to smile, but was too near tears and very conscious of a great weariness.

After supper they went out into the air. She now saw that the wreck had drifted some way from the murderous rocks. The night had a brisk breeze, and many stars. Turning to Cornwell, she asked:

"When? How—how long?"

He replied in the same quiet way:

"I can't tell you. I think, three days at most. We are sinking by inches."

"Some ship will see us, pick us up?"

"I hope so."

"You think so?"

He put his arms around her as around a timid child.

"We're out of our course, you see. We were making for land somewhere. It's unlikely— Besides, we can't signal, you see. I'll do all I can—run up a flag—but—but we're off the road. Do you understand?"

"Yes!" she wailed.

"Poor girl!" Cornwell muttered.

"What are we going to do now? I mean, this minute."

"You must go to bed. There's a cabin you could have. Some Scotchwomen had it. They always looked clean. I'll show you."

"But I can't sleep if the ship——"

"It won't happen. Believe me. Besides, I'd come for you. Trust me. You are to go to bed."

He led her to the cabin and looked around with her.

"I expect you'll find a nightdress fit to wear, and all that. They seemed clean people. Good night. I'm going to bed, too. You know where I am if you want me."

"Good night," she quavered.

He left her curtly, and she heard his door shut before she shut hers. Then she was indeed alone! Not even one of her familiar personal possessions was near her. She opened a locker, and saw a very poor, small pile of harsh underclothes. They were clean, but, oh, the crudity, the touch of them! She picked out a night gown, undressed, and put it on. It was as thick as a linen sheet, only unbleached. She got into the lowest berth and dragged the blankets to her ears.

The sea sucked-sucked-sucked. The darkness was alive, thickly peopled. In a dead woman's garment, she shivered and shook. Those poor Scotchwomen! They seemed to come and whisper about her. The nightdress drew their restless ghosts. She saw their faces, square, pallid, their drenched hair, imploring eyes, and hard hands hovering near in the black air. She couldn't, wouldn't pass the night here, with them! She sprang out, stifling a scream, and felt all around the cabin for the door before she found it. She beat with both hands in the darkness on all the walls and doors as she ran, calling:

"Blair! Blair! Where are you, Blair?"

Cornwell's door flew open and he came out, fully dressed, meeting her in the dim passage. He seized and held her.

"What is it, dear? What is it?"

"Ghosts! And—and——"

"I'm here. Hold to me. Your head's full of horrors. I didn't undress in case you'd want me."

"I won't be alone! I can't be!"

"Do you want me to stay with you?"

"Yes! Yes! Always! It's only three days. You said yourself, only three days."

"My heavens! Nance, you love me?"

"I do! I do! You're not to leave me alone!"

"I've got an oil lamp in my cabin. Come in. I want to look at you."

She went in, close against him.

"Sit down, dearest, he said thickly, with a thudding heart. He looked around the bare place for comfort for her; then lifted her to his berth, covered her up, and stood beside her, bending down.

"If I were only the man who put that there!" he whispered, with her left hand against his lips. "If I were the man you were going to marry, I'd know how to take care of you. But you won't have me."

She cried out, beside herself:

"I'll have no one but you! You mustn't leave me!"

"You'll belong to me for three days—mine to take care of and comfort, mine till death us do part? And death won't part us. You know what you're deciding? You're mine?"

She put her arms up to his neck and held his head down. Their lips met.

"Nothing much matters," she said dreamfully. "I can't be alone any more."

"You love me?"

"I've told you so."

"That is enough," said Cornwell,

"We haven't ring and book, we haven't priest, Nance, but—I'm in heaven. Are you? Heaven's church enough. You're mine, and I'm yours, forever."

He kissed her white face till it glowed, and rumbled her brown hair softly, and brought the two long plaits of it down across her breast, and kissed her again between them.

"You look like a very little girl or a Madonna—I don't know which."

She knew she was going to sleep and sleep and sleep. There were no more ghosts. She smiled happily and, putting up a drowsy hand, stroked his cheek.

It was the left hand, and the diamond ring passed over his face like a searing iron. He had it off in a moment.

"This—what shall we do with it?"

She looked at it. How meaningless it was! Four hundred guineas! What were they in the certainty of death?

She answered slowly:

"What you like."

He tossed it from the porthole with a choked laugh and, bending over, kissed her once more.

"You feel safe, my darling?" he asked tenderly. "I'll be in the bunk over you. You'll only have to breathe a word—even to think it. There I am."

He was gay; his eyes shone. He was like a man looking on life rather than death—a long life in which to perpetuate a great love.

Three days!

The thought was with her, but her eyelids were weighted. She fell asleep even while he still kissed her.

For a long while Cornwell sat looking at her while she slept.

CHAPTER IV.

In the next twenty-four hours, man and girl thought of little but each other. Civilization had slipped from them; civilization was never more to trammel

them with her weight of golden shackles. They were alone; they were free; they loved; they were doomed. There was nothing to keep them in these last hours from each other. The man was divinely tender with the girl, keeping her thoughts from the creeping death, keeping her afire and glad, so that she might go down in his arms unafraid; letting her cling all the while to him who was the better fitted for the burden of the terror ahead. She lost herself, leaning on him; she accepted him as nurse, lover, and husband all in one. Intimacies seemed natural and came simply. When she sat by him on deck or helped him cook in the kitchen, which she hated no more, or when, in the light of a baby moon, he brushed out her long hair at night, she acquiesced in all. The sun rose on the third morning and found them happy with a strange happiness that was not of earth.

But when they came up the ladder, part of the deck was awash. The wreck was settling down slowly, surely. She meant to abandon her lovers to the waves before sundown.

Nance stood beside Blair, her hand in his, and together their gaze swept silently over the sea. The horizon was clear on every side, and she said in a faint voice:

"Will it—will it—be to-day?"

He took her in his arms and kissed her and answered, "Yes."

She seemed to him terribly young, pitifully lovely, to die.

She asked like a child:

"It—it's not painful?"

"It's not painful, darling. I can keep you afloat a long while, anyway. You may be——"

He thought, "She'll be unconscious, perhaps, before the end." It seemed better so. He thrashed about in his mind for any means of sparing her.

He had not let her hope or share in even the faint glimmers of escape that

lit his own mind. He was going to fight hard for life and her! He wasn't going to die like a mongrel with a rope around its neck! During the two nights—she had not known it—while she had slept, he had crept soundlessly from his bunk and had fashioned a rough, small raft, which was better than no raft at all, anyway. When the last moment came, they could make a bid, with that, for a few days longer, perhaps. But he mustn't fix her eyes on an almost impossible salvation. He held her within his arms, while the water washed nearly to their feet, saying:

"You must trust yourself to me, absolutely."

There being nothing to do on this third long day of watching, they sat down side by side and looked at the monstrous sea and talked. He was so calm, so content, that he kept at bay the shadow of death.

"Whatever happens," he said, "we've had three wonderful days. It's been honeymoon, hasn't it? I know now, whatever happens, you've loved me. That's a good thought on which to sail into eternity. Nothing can rob me of it. We shall be together till the end, Nance, together always, now."

"The time is so short!" she wailed.

He nodded and caressed her again into calm. There was yet a chance, of course, yet a chance that during a long, light day a steamer would sight his tattered flag and snatch them from the very grave. But it was so remote that he would not excite her about it. Instead, he talked to her, reassured her as a mother reassures a fearful baby. And he promised her:

"Death isn't bad. I've seen it often, and it's nothing to dread. Life is what gives the hard knocks, not death. Supposing you'd sailed safely on and arrived in London, and I——"

"Yes?" she asked curiously. "What were you going to do, Blair?"

He answered, quick and short:

"Get you somehow. Fight for you, anyway. You remember what I told you—love is war?" I wasn't going to let you go."

"But you did let me go that day."

"You're right; I did. It was after that that the resolution came. And I went to work straightway. I sold up everything. Now shall I tell you the whole yarn?"

Anxious to keep her mind off the wash-wash of the water over the deck, he talked on:

"The farm wasn't all mine. I worked it till a year ago with a partner. His widow lives in Calgary, and when he died, he made me promise to see everything straight for her. He died quick, poor chap—was horned by a half-mad steer and hadn't time to settle anything. So I stayed on, straightening matters up and carrying out the plans we'd made together, though I ought to have been in England long ago."

"Ought you? Why?"

"Why? What do you think? War's been raging like hell for months. And you ask me if I ought to be there!"

"Oh." Her mind turned on the question he had lighted newly for her. "Why, yes. Only, in London, I know heaps of men who hadn't thought of going—yet."

"Perhaps. I'm not a ballroom pet, though. It went hard, staying at home. But I'm thankful I stayed long enough to see you, precious girl. Well, after the harvest was in—to go on with my tale—I got busy with the stock and the valuation and what-not; and when I knew the date you were leaving, why, it seemed a plain point to me to hurry up and let our departures coincide. I sold out my share of the farm last week, and the money's in the bank, and I'm here, where of all places in the world I want most to be."

"But if it hadn't been for me, you'd

have been safe. You chose this boat because I was on her."

"If it hadn't been for you, jewel, I'd have been still on earth, and as it is I'm in heaven. It's nice in heaven."

"Blair—you never meant to let me go?"

"Not while we were both in the same old world, and see—I've had my way."

Soon after, they had to shift their position. The wreck dipped a little more, by the head, seeming to deliberate the precise moment for sliding into the glittering sea.

The spring sunlight danced, gay as fairies, upon the ocean. Warm and quiet, the afternoon wore on.

They had lunched and washed the crockery, very orderly. Cornwell insisted cheerfully upon the routine. They had mugs of hot tea at five on deck, withdrawn into the little dry space left to them. And, in spite of their resignation, they came with difficulty toward the end, for they were young and full of life and the evening was fair.

The water came chill, lapping toward the girl's feet, and made her shiver and cry out. Whereat he caught her to him and held her close.

His eyes swept the horizon desperately.

"I can't bear to look!" she moaned.

As before, he commanded:

"Hide your eyes."

"But——"

"I'll tell you when the time comes. We must leave before she founders."

She hid her eyes against his shoulder and waited. Twilight was coming. It would be the same hour, almost, as that other awful time; and from blue warmth the sea would have changed to a vast, tossing grayness, inexpressibly desolate. In this, presently, they would find themselves lost. Dusk would fall, regardless of their cry for light.

Then, all her senses sharpened so

that sound broke on them with an intense shock, she heard Cornwell's shout, and felt the heave of his chest.

She looked up.

"What is it?" she gasped.

"Life!" he cried jubilantly. "Life!"

Following his gaze, she saw the dim shape of a great vessel far off, gradually growing clearer, larger.

"She's seen us," said Cornwell. He leaned against the rail, dragging her off her feet, and kissed her over and over again, beside himself. "Nance," he said with difficulty, "my love, we're saved! Instead of dying, we're going to live together. Oh, Nance! Oh, my darling! Look out there and see!"

As the big vessel drew nearer, still hardly more than a small, dim shape, something cold, suave, jeweled, without mercy, took the girl's heart and held it. It was the hand of her world.

God! She was going back to her world!

She was going back, going to live, to be saved for her soft, gay, scented world!

She wrung her hands and sobbed, laughing, for joy.

Again the music of the London streets! Again the dear familiars! Again the warmth of admiration, of frocks and furs! Again—

The exaltation that had lifted her outside and above Nance Abbott, these three strange days, dropped from her and fell and folded at her feet like a discarded garment. It was—it was—bizarre.

She was saved for her world! Returning to it after three days which she could not deny with a man who would never let her deny them!

In one moment, she was in Cornwell's arms; in the next, she was looking, with a curious detachment, at herself there, in her fit of madness.

The madness seemed to be swept clean out of her as the rescue ship came on.

She said, putting her hands to her head, "I must sit down," and, drawing herself from him, she sat down in a sheltered corner. Following, he dropped on his knees beside her.

"My darling! My darling!" he cried, transported.

He took her hands to kiss.

"No! No!" she uttered, pulling them away. "No! No! Stop! I must think."

Her words laid a naked sword between them.

She was glad of the twilight, in which she stared past him. It dimmed the watchful flame of his eyes. She could hear him breathing.

"Blair——" she began, with panting breath.

"Nance."

"Blair," she said again, "no—I couldn't face it—not if I'm going to live. I thought we were going to die, you and I, but—if we're going to live—it's different. I couldn't! No! No! I couldn't! Have mercy, Blair!"

Putting his hands on her shoulders, he replied:

"I have none. You—you've let me love you too much. Yes. I love you too much. What do you mean?"

"I mean that—I can't."

"You mean that you want me to keep quiet and let you go? In death you would take me—in life you will not? You mean that? You tell me—after this—to go away quietly? Nance, do you know what a man is?"

"Blair——"

"You mean I am to preserve formal relations with you? 'Good morning, Miss Abbott.' 'Good morning, Mr. Cornwell.' Instead of a kiss on your lips in the morning, you ask that?"

It has been said that women never fight fair. She seized a hellish weapon lying to her hand; scarce acquainted as she was with such an idea as burned her brain, she yet formulated it:

"I—I want—— Pity me, Blair! Help me! I want more than that."

"What is it you want?"

"If you have ever loved me, Blair, as you say——" She whispered it to him: "Go away—hide—don't let them find you with me! Oh, don't I know we'll never hide it all—hush it up—if we both go to England together? Oh, won't you? You said there was a chance of keeping afloat—and you wouldn't be burdened with me. Another ship would come. Oh, Blair, I can't bear to marry you! I—I must have what I'm used to! I can't be poor! I told you so! Oh, Blair, please you mustn't come with me! You know I'm engaged to be married—you know if—— People always get to know these things. If you stayed here, Blair, and got away by yourself—— If you've ever loved me, Blair——"

As she put, in the name of love, her dreadful demand, she hid her face. Presently she looked up, all her body cold as stone.

She was alone upon the wreck.

She staggered up and called, "Blair! Blair!" and received no answer. But at that moment she heard, across the sea, mighty shouts that traveled on the still waters. Running over the sloppy, slanting deck, she leaned over the rail and saw the huge hulk of the strange vessel, broadside on, riding almost motionless. They had stopped! There were pigmies of people crowding all about the decks of the ship, and the hail came again from the bridge.

She waved her handkerchief. Then, tearing off her white sweater, she waved that, shrieking.

She heard, as in a dream, the cheery answer. Revived, she hung over the rail watching.

They were putting out a boat. The dark speck pulled steadily over the water.

There was a swirl in her ears and yet the sea was quiet. Hazily she said,

"Blair!" Dimly she felt upon her the weight of a great crime and tried to push it off.

"Blair!" she cried in a fainting voice. "Come up. Where are you?" Her knees were doubling over; darkness fell in a curtain before her eyes.

She was in the arms of two sailors. They were holding her very gently. She opened her eyes and met their commiserating looks. They said:

"All right, miss—all right. Leave yourself to us. We'll get you over easy as a baby. She's feeling giddy. Shut your eyes, miss."

She heard some one patter over the sea-swished deck, calling in a far-off voice:

"Hallo! Hallo! Any one else aboard here?"

She had fainted completely when they got her into the boat.

The liner's side towered over her like an inassailable wall when she opened her eyes once more. Concerned faces peered down at her over the rail like ghosts in a mist. She was not aware, exactly, of how she was handed up among them, amid all their exclamatory questions, their expressions of pity. She heard women saying, "Poor dear, she's perished with cold!" and a stewardess with a nice face hurried up to put a supporting hand under her arm. She was conscious of neat, quick officers flying to make arrangements for her comfort, down below.

But she stood dully on deck, waiting.

She knew, somehow, that there was something to wait for, though what she did not clearly recognize.

Waiting, deaf to their invitations to hurry below and be cared for, she sorted out of the blundered haze of her mind the trouble. Blair was on the wreck. He ought to be fetched. The sea, to which she had ruthlessly consigned him, looked so gray. It was as dark, now, as slate, and cold!

A brisk, gray-bearded man spoke very kindly, but with authority:

"My dear young lady, you must go below and have some hot tea. And then you'll be able to tell us all your adventures at dinner time. Come, let the stewardess take you down at once, won't you?"

He was the captain, looking extremely anxious on her behalf. She sorted out a question:

"Where is this ship going to?"

"Port of London."

The relief! She wasn't going to some alien place, but straight back to that dear, warm, rich city. Still she lingered, looking at them all strangely.

"Come, my dear," said the encouraging stewardess.

She burst out:

"The wreck! The wreck! The *Vesta*! Where is she?"

"A long way off, my dear young lady," said the captain, "and she'll soon be further. There, if you must see! Take one last look at her."

He humored her very kindly, but began to be decisive about shepherding her below. Straining her eyes, she made out the, shapeless hulk rolling very gently and well down by the head. She was as dark as the sea on which she lolled, and as quiet.

Suddenly it happened. A dull roar broke from her; she broke apart and

flew into pieces, hurling herself, shattered, into sea and air. Over the heaving water echoed the rumble of her death cry.

Twice Nance Abbott screamed piercingly, and a big man took her in his arms and carried her below. She fought him feebly, crying:

"No! No! I must—— What happened? The *Vesta*—is she blown up?"

The man put her down in a first-class cabin and held her.

"Brandy!" he said, and the stewardess had it at the girl's pale lips.

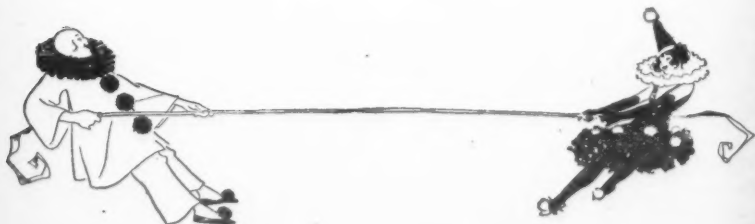
They forced it on her. Her teeth chattered, but her pulse steadied. Looking up with tragic eyes, she asked:

"Is the wreck destroyed?"

"Yes, my dear," said the stewardess; and the doctor added: "It's always done, you see. They left a Maxim fuse aboard. Wrecks are never left at large, you know. Now"—his irony was none the less tremendous for its bland unconsciousness—"aren't you feeling better about it all?"

She spoke to no one. She wept and wept, her tears relieving the awful silence of her locked lips. All the night she could feel his arms, hear his voice, see him who had been so strong, so virile, so young, so much the very essence and power of life itself. He—he, the vital spark of the world, could he—*could* he—have died in the flame and the sea?

TO BE CONTINUED.





Red and Gray

By A. C. Allenson

PLEYDON wondered, as he gazed up into the starry sky, how long he had lain on the cold, dewy ground. The night was clear and still. It seemed to him that he had been sleeping, but dreamlessly, and yet he had the sensation of having traveled far through the night, whither he did not know. As he moved to ease his cramped limbs, sharp, stabbing pain brought him back to clearer consciousness. A low, weary groan, so near that it seemed to be breathed into his ear, cleared away the last of the mists and restored the broken connection in his mental processes. Now it all came back to him—the sudden cessation of the thunder of the big guns that had pounded away ceaselessly, day and night, for a week; the climb over the top; the charge over the desolate, shell-plowed strip of country; the machine guns' hail, swishing and splashing like a furious rainstorm; then the clash—bayonet, butt, fist; and then his own duel with the Boche and the fury of his foe's desperate lunge.

In that moment, Dick Pleydon had been thankful for his lifelong athletic training—the boxing ring, the football field. Quick, more actively alert than his stockier adversary, he had parried the thrust and driven home. After that something else had happened, and he had gone down, down into the still blackness. He wondered when all that had been—yesterday, last week, a lifetime past? Then came a sense of ex-

ultation. It had been a man's-sized fight, and the Canadians had proved the mettle of the New World stuff.

He himself was an American, a New Yorker, lieutenant in a regiment of Canadian Highlanders. Broadway would have the news by this time. There was the faintest lightening of the blackness in the eastern sky. He guessed it must be near closing time at the theaters, and he saw the gay, laughing throng pouring into the Great White Way—exquisitely gowned, dainty women and men such as he had once been. Despite pain, he laughed at himself—the kilted, muddy, bloody scarecrow. It seemed almost unbelievable that he, too, once had been clean washed, had worn fine linen and good clothes.

Then he began a personal inventory, wondering how much he was damaged. His left shoulder seemed out of commission. There was a stiff, blood-dried weal across the right temple, a pretty close shave, he guessed. The back of his head hurt badly and was blood-clotted. Some one had given him the butt in the scrimmage. There was something wrong with one of his legs. What should he do?

He began to think more appreciatively of the trench dug-out in Paradise Row, despite mud and rats. It might be possible to creep back. He was about to make a start when there came the sound of a shot somewhere in the darkness. A moment later a star shell screamed across the velvety sky, burst

and hung—it seemed endlessly—a brilliant, searching, white-blue glare, over the ghostly broken ground. The silence waked; a furious volley crackled from the trenches in front, raged hysterically, then dropped again into stillness.

"Mr. Pleydon!" The voice seemed little more than a whisper.

"Nerves!" decided Dick, though he had never felt less jumpy in his life. That his subconscious self should be polite enough to "mister" its associate furnished an instant's amusement. It could not be one of his pals, for they were a notoriously informal lot, whose free and easy manners at Salisbury Plain had nearly been the death of some of the old-time pipeclay-and-ramrod officers.

"Mr. Pleydon!" There it was again.

Dick was now too wide awake to attribute the voice to the crack on his head. He turned warily, for movement was dangerous as well as painful. The speaker must be the man lying near, whom increasing light showed to be in an enemy uniform. Dick guessed it must be the chap he had crossed bayonets with.

"Hello! Who are you?" he asked.

There came back to him, as he spoke, the thought that had flashed into his mind as he and the Boche had clashed—that the man's face was familiar.

"You don't know me," answered the man. "My name's Seiler, John Seiler. I was spinning-room boss in your father's mill in Selborough, New York State."

Dick recalled hazily that he had heard of such a man. Possibly he had seen him on his home visits.

"I came back to Germany on a holiday, before the war broke out. Then this happened, and I had to stay. It's the long stay now, I guess," he said.

"Got it badly?" asked Pleydon. It was a little awkward to bayonet a man and then show solicitude for his well-being.

"About all in," replied the man. "I didn't know you till it was too late. Anyway, it's all in the game. It was one of us, and you had the luck. No ill feeling."

As he listened to the man, who talked his own tongue and belonged to the world he knew, there seemed to Dick something radically wrong with humanity, when men would still obey the bloody behests of a power-drunk epileptic, besotted by the crazy blasphemy that he was the anointed of God, and plunge the world into a night within which their own peace and happiness would be hideously extinguished.

"Anything I can do for you?" Dick asked.

"A drink, if you've got it," replied Seiler.

Pleydon had a full canteen. He managed to get at it. Creeping closer, he held it to the other's lips. The man drank; then lapsed into silence. Dick did not know whether it was exhaustion or death.

A light breeze passed over the field; it blew soft and sweet, as if a window in the hall of night had been flung wide to the morning air. He fancied he could scent and taste the salt of the open sea, and it brought back the far Western world—home, friends, a hundred dear memories. Remembrance of Ruth Seton came to him, and in his pain he rested, a great content in his heart.

Then the long silent man spoke again.

"I was thinking, after this hell is over, you'll be going back perhaps to the old place—Selborough," he whispered. "There's something I wish you would do. There's a girl there. We were to have been married when I got back. She worked in Edgerton's Department Store—was a waitress in the dining rooms. Anna Meyer her name is. Maybe—"

"Why, I know her," replied Pleydon.

"I used to lunch there when I was in Selborough."

He recalled the pretty, vivacious girl who had been a great favorite with the business men who frequented the place at midday. Dick, too, had liked her bright ways and pretty, rather saucy repartee. He wondered a moment whether he should tell Seiler that she was no longer in Selborough, but had flitted off to New York. Then he decided it would be just as well to keep silent about it. It had happened that he had traveled from Selborough to New York by the train that Anna had taken. He had not known that she was leaving until, walking through the train, he had seen her. She was very pretty and ladylike, so little wonder that he had declined an invitation to bridge from a party of acquaintances and had sat down beside her. She had told him that she was leaving Selborough for good and had a position to go to in the city. From the station, he had driven her around to her room, which had been already engaged, and had gone on to his own quarters. There had been a little chaff among his friends who had seen him with her. Two or three times afterward, he had dropped into the place where she worked. She had seemed quieter, more reserved, smarter; and then one day he had found her gone. He had made an inquiry of the cashier at the door as he had gone out, but without result.

Once afterward, he had met her on the street. She had been well-dressed, had worn jewelry he had not noticed on her before. Over an ice-cream soda, she had told him that she was going to be married soon, but all his bantering had not elicited the name of the lucky man. From her indirect remarks, he had formed the notion that it was some one from Selborough whom he knew. At the door, he put her into a taxi, and that was the last he had seen of her. Shortly afterward, he had gone

up to Canada on an engineering job, and a few months later was soldiering overseas.

It would serve no useful purpose now to spoil Seiler's dreams. Likely enough the girl was married by this time. He did not think she was the kind to be contented with a workman's wages in a mill town.

"I'd like her to know of this—how it all ended," said the German. "It will be a trouble to her. Perhaps you have friends who would tell her kindly. I made a will before I came here. She gets all I have. It isn't a great deal, but it will help. That waitress job isn't worth much, and sometimes a girl alone has hard luck."

"I'll do what I can if I get out of this," Pleydon promised. "But perhaps it will go better with you than you think."

"No, I'm at the finish," said the man. "I'll be gone before the sun is up, and glad enough I'll be to have done with the torture. Will you shake hands, Mr. Pleydon? For me the big peace has come."

Dick reached over, and their hands clasped.

"Good!" whispered Seiler. "Tell little Anna good-by for me, and say that I was thinking about her to the last. I wish——"

What he wished Pleydon was not to know, for the man spoke no more. In the pale light of the dawn, Dick saw that he was dead.

II.

Ruth Seton alighted at the gates of the country club and sent her runabout home. Turning from the driveway, she entered the winding path that ran through the wood to the side entrance of the clubhouse.

She had chosen the hour to avoid the crowd of players who would, by this time, have started on their rounds.

She trusted luck to enable her to get away before the tea-hour visitors came. To have stayed away would have caused questioning at home and have necessitated explanations she could not have given. She was restless; undecided, and wanted to be alone to think matters out. Life's road, which had seemed to lie before her so plain and straight, had suddenly split, and she had to make up her mind which of the forks to follow.

There had been a dance at the Edgertons' the night before, and Paul Edgerton had made her an offer of marriage. It had not been unexpected, but, at the last, it had found her unprepared to answer. She had asked for a day or two's time for consideration, and, perhaps understanding, Paul had consented. The goal of her mother's ambition had been realized, and to onlookers it appeared an ideal match—the union of crude, splendid wealth and the most charming of the old-time aristocracy.

The Setons, far back into early-Colonial days, had been social landmarks in the county. Their men had usually been preachers or lawyers; their money-makers had been conservative, fastidious men, who had carried on old-fashioned businesses in old-fashioned ways and had never been more than comfortably off. The Seton women, as a rule, had been satisfied with their prestige, their families, and the simpler hospitalities of an unostentatious day. Latterly, Selborough had been revolutionized. Formerly, here and there, had been small, whitewashed, stone cotton mills on the banks of the broad river, which had carried on manufacturing in leisurely, old-fashioned ways. The town was close to the sea and occupied a fine strategic position commercially, being close to several large centers of population. A new railway branch and the building of docks waked the drowsy town to life; huge factories thrust the little make-believes of mills aside. Fortunes had been made in a

decade or two that dwarfed into insignificance the former standards of wealth. The tides that swept the newcomers to prosperity submerged deeply the old landmarks and overflowed former grandeurs, too fixed and ponderous to rise with them.

Ruth's father had died on the threshold of his legal career. Her mother, an energetic, ambitious woman, had spent or was spending her small capital lavishly in maintaining their place in the new world and in establishing her daughter in a commanding position there. The girl's charm promised to make the task a comparatively easy one. She had the intellectual vigor, frank and engaging, of the newer democracy, blended with the fineness and beauty that make a rare bit of Old World porcelain superior to the most perfect of the merely new.

She was no blind, helpless victim of her mother's purposes, and was much too modern and sensible to despise wealth and its advantages. There were many things about Paul Edgerton that she did not like. He was a man of no especial abilities or personality, dwarfed by contrast with his brusque, powerful father, who had hewed his way, in a quarter of a century, from humble beginnings to great wealth.

Paul did things well that were of little importance; he played a good game of golf, had some county reputation as a cotillion leader, was a prominent figure in club life and social amusements. That he admired and liked Ruth was beyond question, and there were compensations for mediocrity's defects. Much could be done with the Edgerton wealth, which was increasing yearly by leaps and bounds. They owned a great department store, had mill interests, and old Tom Edgerton had accumulated stock in public utilities—light, water, electric traction, telephone—when wisacres had pooh-poohed them. He had bought real es-

tate where a new city had afterward risen, and water-front sites—sand and mud and swamp stretches that had made men laugh at his folly, but that had become priceless within a few years. Those who had laughed explained the thing as amazing luck; so it was, but it was the kind of luck that marches with the man who is a day or two ahead of the crowd.

Ruth liked pleasant things, but now, when she wanted them, there was always the money question to be considered. The day was not far distant when she must marry money or step from the charmed circle. She would not have found it hard to step down, but, she reflected, it would be a bitter experience for her mother. Standing now at the wicket gate near the wood's edge, she stopped to sum up and reach a verdict. If she were only free, if life were not so horribly complicated! If— Oh, there were so many "ifs!"

She rested her elbows on the gate and considered, her eyes brightening, the color in her face glowing a little more vividly. She understood at last, very clearly, very simply. There was a man overseas, somewhere in France, and he seemed to come forward and stand between her and Edgerton. She knew that if he were actually there before her and called, she would go through the gate and follow. A sigh escaped her lips that was the expression of her desire. She went forward knowing her mind.

III.

There were four men on the veranda of the clubhouse when Ruth entered the cozily-furnished ladies' sitting room and sat down to while away an hour letter writing. She simply had to talk to Dick. If she could not have him with her in person, she would work up the illusion and through the medium of the written word hold communion

with him. Before she began to write, she peeped through the open window and saw Judge Valentine, her oldest and best friend, next to Dick. He had been her father's professional associate, and since the latter's death, had managed the shrunken finances of the Setons with a skill that almost amounted to wizardry. Ruth was glad to see him, for he had been away for some time. A talk with him always had a tonic effect upon her.

Mr. Pleydon, Dick's father, was there, too—a quiet, grave man who seemed more isolated than ever, now that his son had gone away. Ruth would have liked to talk to him so that he might know how all her thought was with his, over the ocean. Beside them were Doctor Raistrick, the rector of Selborough's most fashionable church, and—of all persons Ruth desired to avoid to-day—Paul Edgerton.

A servant came out, as she looked, and called Mr. Pleydon to the telephone. Ruth went back to her letter. The house was unusually quiet, and the men's voices came to her distinctly through the windows. Evidently Mr. Pleydon was the subject of the conversation. Some one observed that he was failing rapidly, for so young and active a man, and the clergyman made a remark that Ruth did not hear distinctly, but that obviously was about Dick.

The United States was not yet at war against the common enemy, but still walked patiently the difficult road of neutrality, if not exactly turning the other cheek to the smiter, doing its best to keep out of the strife under most terrific provocation. The preacher of pacifist platitude was flinging the soft mush of nonresistance at it from one side; the slacker and Prussian-bribed crook were bombarding it from the other with semithreats and working through their ready tools in legislature and press.

"Quixotism!" Ruth heard Valentine say, in his clear, biting tones that had the acid of irony in them. "The only thing I envy in youth is its imprudent impulsiveness."

"I can't see it, Jim," answered Raistrick. "It has a fine and chivalrous side, of course, but the practical aspect is not to be disregarded. A man's life is given him to invest to the best advantage. It seems to me quixotic to cast all to the winds for life in a muddy trench, killing and taking chances of being killed."

"And in a quarrel that is none of his business," added Edgerton.

"I don't know about that," said Valentine. "He thinks it is, and I fancy could make quite a case for it. The world is growing out of the narrow nationalism that is only a step beyond village parochialism. A line separates two nations of like ideals, and because the people who live on one side are called by one name, and those on the other by another, are their real interests, as belonging to humanity, not essentially the same?"

"One day men may come so to regard it," replied Raistrick, "but that time has not yet arrived."

"Yet you preach a common humanity—one great family under the headship of one Father, a kingdom wherein is neither Jew nor Greek, and in which the walls of partition of an ignorant day have been broken down," answered Valentine. "What warms my heart to Dick Pleydon is that he's fighting for something that hasn't a dollar in it. That he need not have gone makes his service all the finer. He's straight-bred American, yet for the faith that is in him and loyalty to duty, he flings all into the scales."

"But the brutalizing horror of it all—the blood, the pain, the ruinous waste!" exclaimed Raistrick. "And the world, we thought, had come at last to believe that the ape and the tiger,

with their cruelty and blood lust, were dying."

"The poet dreamed it, hoped for it as a glorious ideal, and the world that was neither poet nor dreamer liked the notion, because it was a belief that shoved a comfortable cushion under its back," said Valentine. "So far as my experience goes, I can find no twilight-sleep business in the birth of the man that is to be. There is no sunshine gospel in evolution. It is a progressiveness that has to be won by fighting, suffering, dying. The ape and tiger lust will vanish when ape and tiger are destroyed or placed within bounds they cannot pass. It is the fight of Michael and his host against Lucifer and the powers of darkness."

"And meantime," interjected Edgerton, "the world is to be plunged into ruin. If I had the power, I'd cut the sinews of war. I'd forbid our people to travel in the war zone, giving them to understand that if they disregarded the prohibition, they would be left to pay the penalty of their folly. I wouldn't sell a shell, an ounce of powder, a bag of wheat to any of them till they came to their senses. The other day I read statistics showing that the world is facing universal bankruptcy."

"The thing the world can afford to lose most easily is money," replied Valentine. "There are other possessions it cannot lose without a bankruptcy that involves soul as well as body. Privation and sharp necessity have made the world over more than once, and can do it again. Hunger has made wealth, and when wealth and luxury have become apoplectic, hunger has cured them again."

"Then, to quell the ape and tiger, you must become ape or tiger," said Raistrick.

"Not a bit of it!" retorted Valentine. "Is France to-day, in her lean, fit splendor, with her sublime 'They shall not

pass! poorer than a France fatly prosperous would be? Is the plump, well-fed *boulevardier* of peace times a finer man than the *poilu* in the trenches? France's dead live forever. Generations unborn will find life's richest inspiration in the story of the Marne and Verdun. Impoverishment! She never was so rich. There is more soul in the fighting line than in all the prosperous money marts of the neutral world."

"And you stand with those who think we are dollar drunk, with lost aspirations and degenerate souls?" asked Raistrick.

"No, I don't!" snapped Valentine. "The American is sound to the core, and the soul will assert itself presently. When the pinch comes, as come it will—for our patience covers a quick, live soul, sensitive to all that touches its honor and humanity's rights—we'll strip and stand with the best of them. The Philistine withes will not always bind us; one day the breaking will come, and we'll stand with splendid Canada and Great Britain and the rest of the free-born sons of the blood. It's not so easy for us at the start. We've had all the world's surplus populations poured into our veins for the past half century—the paupers of Europe, who have never had time or opportunity to evolve a national soul. Their influence is at work in our press, our legislatures. They have tasted money, thanks to us, after centuries of hardest poverty and oppression, and everything that stands in the way of their getting money is bitterest hell to them. But our glory has been the ability to do the hard, the sacrificial things when they have meant poverty, pain, and death, and the genius for that kind of work has not been lost."

"Yes, I believe we could do them again, if the fit occasion came," agreed Raistrick. "But, after all, peace is better than war, prosperity than adversity. When one thinks of the wholesale

slaughterings, the scarred humanity, it seems that one can hardly pay too high a price for peace."

"And has prosperity no casualty lists, no woundings, maimings, killings?" asked Valentine. "There is no red in them to horrify us; the slain are buried decently and unobtrusively; the scars and maimings are not seen so plainly; but if souls had faces, and we could see them as they are, branded, scorched, blinded, we should turn some of the pity upon ourselves."

"I don't see what you mean," said Edgerton.

"It was once said," answered the old judge, with quiet impressiveness, "that it is better to enter into life maimed or blind than to have two feet or two eyes and be cast into hell fire. We take our boys from college, fine, clean, chivalrous, and set to work to squeeze the generosity and chivalry out of them as so much quixotism. We set before them, as example, some God-forsaken, man-hated, devil-despised runt who has squeezed millions out of his fellows. How many of our rich men are bigger and finer for their wealth? They have larger houses, more servants, richer food and drink, costlier clothes, but the men behind all these things? Are they broader or narrower, more generous or greedier? There are, of course, exceptions, but take them by and large, they were better men at the start than at the finish, and that's failure. To come back to Dick Pleydon. I don't say that other boys here are wrong because they don't stand where he is—that's their testing; but I remember this—that he might have been having a royal time these prosperous days, making money, having his fun, going about with the boys and girls enjoying life, but he chose to stand in the ranks of the Crusaders, and to me he has chosen the better part. No knight who lies in an Old World abbey, his effigy with crossed legs on his tomb in token that he fought

for the Sepulcher, even went out with grander chivalry or nobler purpose. That's the kind of quixotism we can't have too much of."

"Well, we'd never agree about it, judge," said Edgerton, rising. "Suppose we start on our match, doctor?" And, calling their caddies, the two went off to their mimic warfare.

There was a dry smile on Valentine's face as he watched them. There wasn't much danger of Paul Edgerton ever donning uniform; he appreciated too highly his advantages as a rich man's son. Sometimes the young man suspected that Valentine knew more about his life than he cared to have known.

As the two drove off from the first tee, Valentine heard a step on the veranda behind him and turned to see who was there.

"Why, Ruth!" he exclaimed, rising. "Where on earth have you come from? I didn't see you drive up. No match this afternoon?"

"No, I'm just lazy, Uncle Jim. I've been at the window there, eavesdropping while you made poor Doctor Raistrick's flesh creep," she laughed.

"Creep! I'd like to make it gallop!" he declared. "Really, Ruth, it's more and more impressed on me that I am a potential bishop damned into a lawyer. Pity I'm too old for orders. I'd like half an hour in Raistrick's pulpit some sunny Sunday morning, when his congregation drops in to give God their weekly nod."

"With me in the box under the pulpit to say amen, like an old-time clerk," she said.

"What? Amen to the things I said to Raistrick?"

The kindly, cynical eyes rested on her inquiringly. He knew the difficulty of her position. Perhaps she misunderstood his glance and read it as classing her among those unable to do the hard, sacrificial things.

"Yes, to all of them," she answered, meeting his gaze.

"H'mm!" he murmured.

"Yea, verily, Mr. Skeptic," she retorted.

"Tell me about everything, Ruthie," he said, laughing at her earnestness. "I haven't seen you for a whole month. A hermit's life in New York City is exacting."

"There's nothing to tell," she replied. "The same squirrel in the same little cage. Teas, tournaments, golf, boating, dances. This man made a million in twenty minutes; the other has an amazing car with gold fittings, silk lining, and cylinders unimaginable as to number. Some engaged, others married—so it goes."

"As in the days of Noah, when the flood came. And you, Ruth?" he pursued. "I heard rumors only this morning."

"Naturally, this being Selborough," she smiled.

"But——" he probed.

"These unofficial rumors can't be relied upon," and she shook her head slowly. "But come, let me row you on the lake, unless you want to be caught. The Assyrians are descending in force."

He surveyed the line of cars coming up the drive.

"And the sheen of their spears was like stars on the sea," he quoted, as the speeding machines flashed and glittered in the sunlight. "I never liked 'sheen,' did you? One moment, my dear. I wonder what has become of Mr. Pleydon?"

He called a servant and made inquiry.

"Mr. Pleydon went home some time ago, judge," said the man. "He didn't wish to disturb you, so he asked me to explain if you inquired. Bad news came over the wire. The Canadian boys have been doing big things at Ypres, and they say that Mr. Dick Pleydon

is missing. Too bad, sir! Fine young gentleman, too."

IV.

Valentine left her at the door of her home. They spoke little on the drive. There was little to say, much to think about. He had seen her hands grip the arms of her chair, the white sorrow in her face, the brave effort to recover from the shock. Her guard had been down, and the unexpected thrust had reached her heart. He understood now what he had often pondered.

When he had gone, she went upstairs slowly and dropped into a chair, dazed and listless. A bird twittered in a tree near the window. A bee droned in heavy content among the flowers of the little balcony.

Missing! The world was empty. The great black word seemed printed heavily across it. She had read of the devastating artillery fire, of living and dead buried together, blotted out. A fiery rebellion against the needless sacrifice raged within her. There were millions of others, but the best went, the finest, the bravest, while the shirkers, the slackers were left. She had not seen him since his enlistment. She knew why he had not spoken to her. There had been, in his sight, nothing he could offer her. He was not wealthy, and she was a woman cradled in luxury, a costly exotic, the attainment of wealth and comfort her goal in life, a rich man's purchase. He had sent, at sailing, his portrait, a gay little greeting on the back of it. She took it up now and looked at the debonair, kilted figure.

"Dick! Dick!" she whispered, her head bowed on her outstretched arms.

Then came a gleam of hope. Early lists were unreliable. Valentine had spoken of the possibility of mistake. Men were often reported missing who turned up again. Then darkness, impenetrable, fell again. Mistakes were rare exceptions.

An hour later, she heard her mother return, and presently the door opened.

"Why, Ruth, I wondered what had become of you," said Mrs. Seton. "When I reached the club, you had vanished." Then she saw the girl's face and laid a hand on her shoulder. "I heard the bad news. It's horribly sad. We all liked him so much. It was unfortunate the tidings should reach you at a place as public as the club. I mean on Paul's account as well as your own. It must be disconcerting for a man to find the girl who is to be his wife mourning another man with whom her name has been linked in gossip."

Sometimes Mrs. Seton's outspokenness overcame her discretion.

"We won't talk of it, mother," said Ruth. "But I am not engaged to Paul."

"Well, you know what I mean," answered her mother, more diplomatically. "I speak of these things as they appear to outsiders. Every one talked of you this afternoon, almost as much as of poor Dick. It was unfortunate, just at this moment. To a girl's vivid imagination, a tragically romantic episode makes powerful appeal. Dick was a charming, compelling man, with his oddly attractive streak of knight-errantry. Many women doubtless found him so."

"I don't know why you speak of these things. They seem much more than harsh," answered Ruth quickly.

"Only to remind your romantic fancies of facts as they are," said her mother. "It seems unkind, I know, to mention them at this moment. There is almost as much talk of that affair of Dick's with the girl from Edgerton's. I heard that Paul rebuked one man who spoke of it this afternoon. It was very chivalrous of him. One must not, of course, moralize too severely, for men of Dick's attractiveness find girls of that order by no means inflexible. Single men, in or out

of barracks, would be much less charming as plaster saints. Remember, Ruth, I speak only in your own interest. If things are as they seem certain to be, and poor Dick has paid the price of his venturesomeness, it would be worse than folly to mar your chances of permanent happiness because of a tragic dream. Romance, my dear, touched by poverty, is the tawdriest of flimsy things. I know that only too well."

She waited for the answer that did not come.

"It is with me night and day, Ruth, this scheming and planning about money. It's the Edgerton connection now or genteel poverty, that bleakest of all wretchedness. Most women have their locked chambers, their shrines of dead love, tender, beautiful visions of lost paradises, memories of those who commanded their hearts, but not their judgments. We live in a world where we dream of the best and have to be content with second best, and in which visions are the least profitable things."

She bent and kissed the girl's hair lightly, then left her.

V.

One might have supposed him a stranger, beholding New York's amazing sights for the first time. The figure had the lean power of perfect fitness. The strong face, a curious pale brown, matched the alert, vigorous body. There was a far-away look in the man's eyes, not that of the dreamer, but as if what he looked upon were silhouetted against some profounder background of compelling experience. The air of separateness was about him. One sees it in deaf, deep-thinking men; it springs from the sense of citizenship in two worlds. Night had fallen. The lights of the great city shone in all their famed white brilliance.

All the evening he had walked the streets tirelessly, finding keen enjoy-

ment in all he looked upon—the huge buildings, the roaring traffic, the wonderful kaleidoscopic crowds. Sometimes he turned out of the throng and stood in a doorway to watch the marvelous film unroll.

The theaters were now open, but the streets had a superior fascination for him. He had oddly alert movements; a touch, an unexpected sound in the babel above him, and he quickened into tense life. Then, with a smile at his jumpiness, he fell back into his mood again. Yet he had lived here. The district he walked in was as familiar as the palm of his hand. All that he now saw he had seen hundreds of times before. He had changed, not the city.

Pleydon had walked the labyrinths of hell. Visions grimmer than Dante ever dreamed of he had seen. The thunders of Armageddon were still in his ears. He saw a devastated, scarred land, forlorn barrenness such as a wilderness never showed, cities grimmer than Sodom or Gomorrah in their stark, scorched ruin, nothing counted holy, nothing revered, everywhere obscene, hellish havoc, deliberate, planned, purposeful.

Pleydon had come back to New York not with hatred of war, but for the debased makers of it. His mind was fired by the profanation of the living temple, mankind. Peace had a new, fairer glory for him. Not peace figuring with shaking hand the cost, but mighty, with swift, keen sword, the keeper and defender of the eternal standards of right and wrong.

There had been a time when he had believed that God had failed His creation, and God the Trimmer, the Neutral, the Compromiser was his conception of the devil. Now he knew that it was men who had failed God. He saw that the mills of the Eternal were still grinding, slowly, but with inexorable exactness. The hearts of men were being sifted out before the judgment seat by

the terrible, winnowing fan—chaff from wheat.

What he had seen had created within him a great tenderness and sympathy. Courage, patience, sacrifice were no longer empty words to him. Men—the meanest of them—he knew to be immeasurably great; women—the least regarded of them—had souls that shone with the white glory of the stars.

He now watched the crowd surge by, brilliant, vivacious, happy, and he thought of those other crowds, refugees from shot-swept towns and villages, with their pitiful household wreckage—old, broken men, fleeing the fiery avalanche that thundered at their heels; women and children with a fear in their eyes that must have made the angels fold their wings before their faces and God Himself weep.

He looked now upon the fresh wonder of happy, unafrighted little ones, in whose eyes rested no haunting terrors. As they were God willed all should be—on the plains of Belgium, in Serbian mountain villages—and Pleydon rejoiced that though the night was still dark, dawn was streaking the eastern sky, and that he had had his part in the shaping of a new world.

He found a seat near a tiny green oasis in the wilderness of streets. The night was warm; the life of the city lapped at his feet like the waves of a summer sea. He began to look inward at himself, to measure up the results of the big time, a year when figured in months, but a lifetime in experience. All his ideas had been shaken down, flung into the melting pot, and run off into new molds. Nothing was the same. Money—he had little of it; his father, for a manufacturer, was not wealthy. War would take years from his life and earning capacity, but money had ceased to be the great prize of existence; it had shrunk and dwindled in the furnace.

He had no regret for what was gone;

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neither fear nor doubt for the future oppressed him. This life he saw more than ever as an episode in a vast career that stretched boundlessly in both directions—a paragraph in a mighty volume. Death he knew to be but the putting off of a garment, frayed, dingy, outgrown, and the assumption of another, fine, clean, beautiful. The fear of the change was but the relic of superstition. To him it had come to be no more dreaded than a bed to the sleeper, wearied with the heat and burden of the day. He thought of men he had known in the trenches, to whom the change had come swiftly, in the twinkling of an eye. He no more doubted their existence in the vaster labor house than he doubted his own being. And there were others, men with marred records, who had risen in some supreme, fiery testing to sublimity, who had burst the shackles of the past, and in the golden glory of heroic sacrifice had blotted out the evil writing that stood against them.

By this time the crowd had thinned. He saw humanity no longer in the mass, but one by one—the raindrops instead of the river, the actor rather than the spectacle.

He watched the girl walk slowly along the street. A light, filmy veil half concealed the upper part of her face. She was plainly dressed, with a neat trimness more attractive than bizarre fashion could have made her. Her figure was slight, but well rounded. She walked, looking neither to left nor right, not as one seeking prey, and yet not as if she had any definite destination before her. As he watched her, he realized that the distance between the woman in Belgium and Northern France and the woman in New York City was not so wide as one might have supposed.

There was a greater war than the Great War; it was more universal than had been dreamed—war with rifle, bay-

onet, artillery, with trade combination, with the massing of wealth, the leaguering of unscrupulous power. Everywhere the same lusting for a place in the sun, for domination and rule over others, the same insolent, contemptuous tyranny, the lordship of might over right.

As Pleydon had seen it in the Old World, its color was red, the crimson, maddening glow of blood and flame. The horror of its hue had long been deeply planted in the breast of man, far back in the beginnings of his ascent from the ape of the forest. But here, as he regarded it in the streets of New York, it was gray, the ashen, pale-lipped gray of the baffled, defeated, at the hopeless end of the long struggle. Red and gray! Red and gray! And he saw that the red was a tenderer, fairer color than the gray, the killing it did infinitely more kindly. The gray indicated the slow torture of the rack, the slaying with devilish detail, the ingenuity that sought to make quite sure that no nerve or fiber should fail to yield its maximum tribute of suffering. Men, broken after valiant struggle, hiding wounds in darkened homes; women driven over the cliff into the abyss for want of bread; children hungry, handicapped from birth, learning from infancy the best way to strike back at the foe, society, which has made or suffered hopeless, uncheered wretchedness to exist at its very doors.

As these thoughts flashed through his mind, the girl drew nearer. Then the man appeared, the prey thing, the hunter, coming from the opposite direction, sauntering and questing as he came. His appraising glance was almost a physical touch. He reminded Pleydon of a rat, a remarkable rat, a rat of qualities and gifts, that he had often seen in a trench that had been his home for months; it had had the leanest, hungriest face—pointed, narrow, insatiable—and the fattest, sleek-

est body. The man on the sidewalk was its human counterpart. In the next life, he would probably be one of the trench vermin. He had the same cold, voracious eyes.

At the contemptuously familiar greeting, the girl paused an instant irresolutely, then shrank away. The hunter followed with bantering words. She half turned, and the light fell on her face. Despite the light veiling, Pleydon knew her. He rose and crossed the pavement.

"Anna!" he said.

She looked up, startled, shame's crimson on her face. After a challenging glance at the intruder, the rat thing hurried away.

"Mr. Pleydon!" she gasped.

"Never be surprised to see any one in New York," he said.

"I thought you were—over there." She nodded eastward.

The girl had changed; she was not the same as when they had come down in the train together from Selborough. The sunshine had gone, the gay sparkle of her youth and beauty, but she was still very attractive, though in a subdued way.

He thought of Seiler in his grave in far-away France, and anger stirred in him momentarily that a strong man's faith and love should have been wasted on so frail a thing. Then he wondered if the dead have vision of earth, whether human sorrow and failure can reach them. Censoriousness left him, and there came a sense of responsibility, of the trust reposed in him by the dead German he had killed, who had loved this girl and had died with her name on his lips.

"Still living in New York, Anna?" he inquired.

"Yes," she replied hurriedly. "But I must be going. It's late."

"You don't mind my walking a little way with you?" he asked. "I haven't

seen a soul I know in the city this evening."

She did not answer, and he fell into step at her side. She had liked him in the old time; he had been friendly, but not like some of the others. He had joked with her, but with a respect that had touched her self-regard. Now, for a moment, she wondered if he were like the others, only deeper, more secretive. She stole a swift glance at him and knew him for the clean man he had always been. He must be rather green if he could not size her up, she thought, or it might be that he was clever and regarded her as an interesting study. His references to Selborough she answered briefly, as if the subject had no interest for her. She wanted to be rid of him. There was a quietly masterful way about him that she resented.

"You're not in such a hurry that you can't take supper with me?" he said. "It seems like old times to see a home friend."

She hesitated a moment. In spite of her hatred of Selborough memories, he was perhaps the one of all the old-time folks she could most easily tolerate.

"Come along, Anna, you've got to be the soldier's welcomer. I'm going back to-morrow, and it's good to meet some one I know," he smiled.

They went into one of the quieter restaurants, almost deserted at that off hour. She ate little, though he guessed that she was hungry, but by degrees her reserve thawed before his unembarrassing friendliness.

He was not inquisitive, but bit by bit he gathered that she had not been overlucky. Sickness, she told him, had upset some of her plans, and employment had been hard to find. When she thought she had painted too dark a picture, she turned aside to assure him that she nevertheless had done tolerably well. She was a proud little thing,

Dick saw, fearful lest he might think her in need and sponging on him.

"Why don't you pack up and go back to Selborough? It's more human than a city like this, and you have heaps of friends there," he suggested.

"I don't think I'll ever go back," she answered. "New York is a good place for those who want to be nobodies, as well as for those who fancy they'd likely be somebodies. Selborough's only good to go back to if you've made good. That's the small-town way—they either go down on their knees and worship or hand you a bat over the head. There's no in-between way with them."

Dick smiled at the philosophical conclusions of the little bit of fluff before him. He knew how true they were.

She switched the conversation from herself to him, wanting to know something of his experiences, and for an hour they chatted, a little of her old vivacity returning to her.

"I really must go," she said, after inquiring the hour of him.

"What, already? At ten?" he asked.

"Yes, I've got to," and she rose to put a stop to persuasions.

In the street, away from the brilliance of the restaurant, gloom seemed to settle on the girl again. He walked with her to the somber street where she lived. That she was in need, desperate need, he did not doubt. She was on her guard, with every spine set rigidly against sympathy or pity. Yet he could not leave her so resultlessly.

"If you've made up your mind to stay in the city, you've got to have friends, Anna," he said. "They'd be glad enough to help you into getting the kind of position you'd like—something different from table waiting. Now don't you fire up when I talk about help. I'm pretty independent myself, but I've been in corners where a hand was pretty useful, and it didn't make me any the less a man because I was human enough to take it. I know

some decent, sterling people here who would be both able and willing to put something your way or to help you in landing where you'd like to be."

There was a smile on his face, and, as she looked up, the warmth of it reached her. Her bosom rose and fell stormily. It was some time before she spoke.

"I don't know why you——" she began.

"Say it out," he laughed. "'Butt in,' is what you mean. Because we used to be friends, Anna, and I guess you're in hard luck, but too all-fired proud to own up. Over yonder, girl, when one man is down on his luck, the others chip in. What we have is common stock, and we'd think a man pretty cheap stuff who was unfriendly enough not to let us be friendly. The parcel from home—grub, tobacco, money—what belongs to your pal belongs to you, and what belongs to you he has first mortgage on, no frills or bluffs belonging to the smaller world about it. If I'd come home stony broke and met you with a pocket full in the street, don't you think I'd have taken what you'd have been ready enough to thrust on me? You bet I would!"

"Wait a minute," she said hurriedly. "You saw that man—there on the street?"

"Any woman, alone, is exposed to the insults of that kind of carrion," he replied.

"I believe—I should have gone with him if you had not—interfered." There was defiance in her voice and glance.

"No, you wouldn't," he answered. "I saw your face. We all get a bit panicky at times—go right up to the edge and think we'll jump over. Then something steadies us. I told you I was leaving to-morrow. It will be a long trip, but I'm going to ask a friend—she's the real kind—to look you up and make friends. You'll like her, I know."

"I'd rather you didn't," she answered.

"I want neither preaching at nor crying over. I do my own stint of both, and better than any one else could. Men, I guess, are different from women. They don't always want to be digging up the dead and crying over it. They can forget—keep their eyes off the scar or pretend to."

"There are some pretty good chaps among women," he smiled. "I know some."

"Yes, with men, maybe, but they are all woman with women," she answered. "I don't know what makes me talk to you like this, Mr. Pleydon, but I'm glad I met you, now. I never went about before, like to-night; not because I am good or anything like that, only—I didn't. There was once a man in Selborough, and we were to have been married. He went over the sea and stayed there to fight for the Germans. Sometimes it comes to me that he is dead, because he used to seem to me to be worlds away and now he is close by all the time. I hope he's dead, though that sounds a hard thing to say, for he was a good man and he thought a whole lot of me, and it would have hurt him to know. Perhaps he does know, but maybe on the other side it isn't the same."

The girl spoke quietly, without emotion or passion. He had regarded her as so much thistledown blown upon the river, and this inner revelation touched him.

"It would have been the same if he had remained in Selborough," she went on. "I wanted some one better than a working man. I'd seen and talked with gentlemen who had plenty of money, at Edgerton's and other places where I worked, and it set me to dreaming fool dreams. Now I've come to the waking and paying part. You see the window up there with the dim light in it?"

Pleydon looked up to the room indicated, under the roof, and nodded.

"That's the reason I was in a hurry," she said. "There's a baby there, a little boy of mine, and he'll be waiting for me, for it's near his supper time. You know what I mean about women friends?"

A moment later she was gone. He watched her slip into the dingy house, saw the dim light in the upper room become brighter, then walked slowly down the somber street into the brilliant thoroughfare with its gayety, light, music.

VI.

Ruth sat alone, with the long letter on her lap. She had read it a dozen times. Again she turned its pages, and considered.

"I just had to run along to New York," the letter said. "For one thing, I wanted to make sure there was really such a place. During the year, it sometimes seemed a dream city that would vanish at the waking. All I had was a twenty-four-hour leave. We may move across at any time. I got the captaincy—somebody has to get these jobs, you know—then the impulse came and I obeyed, descended, saw, marveled, considered, and returned. Selborough pulled, as you may imagine, but father is away, though I hope to see him in Quebec before I go back.

"And you, Ruth! I just longed to see you—how greatly you cannot imagine. But—well, I had just six hours.

"Now, to leave lamentations, there's something I wish you would do for me. I don't know another person of whom I could ask it, just at the moment. It's about a girl—a Selborough girl. She was a waitress once at Edgerton's—name is Anna Meyer. There's a curious story about her that I'll tell you one of these days. I saw her a few hours ago. She's in hard luck, the hardest, and she's alone, with her baby. I have a special reason for wanting to help her. Will you call at the

address I give below and see her? I know then that you will help. There's nothing more I need say. I ask it because you are just you.

"It seems hard to believe that I was less than fifty miles from you a little time ago. Sometimes it has seemed millions, and at others, as now, I could fancy you in the chair facing me. However—you will do what I ask, Ruth, loyalest of friends. I inclose some money. Babies, I expect, need lots of things."

She was, as he said, loyalest of friends, but he was trying her friendship highly. The disillusioning hurt terribly. Never had she doubted, and she was woman in every fiber and instinct. That her idol had feet of clay, and clay of the commonest, was the sharpest of disappointments. Thought of the other woman penetrated her armor, and she was proud. Then she rebuked herself for her small woman's way of thinking. Who was she to judge woman or man? She, who had been on the verge of selling herself for a man's pocketbook! The fact that some priest would have said, "Whom God hath joined together let no man put asunder," would not have made the trade anything else than a mercenary bargain.

She picked up the letter again to read about the baby. That struck deepest of all. Then she started to her feet, angrily impatient with her Pharasaic sentimentality. She was glad Dick had singled her out for this task. It brought some comfort to know that she was the friend to whom he had turned in sharp emergency.

Despite her determination, Ruth found the task harder than she had anticipated. Anna received her with an astonishment that developed into thinly veiled suspicion and hostility. She knew Miss Seton by sight, and was familiar with the Selborough rumors that linked her name with Paul

Edgerton's. The visitor's aristocratic fineness, her free, unencumbered life, aroused resentment within the girl. Motherhood in a lodging-house attic is not inspiring, and Anna felt the full weight of her disadvantage. The baby lay in an improvised cradle near the bed.

Ruth began to speak of Selborough, but the other's unresponsiveness made conversation difficult. Anna hated Pleydon for sending this woman, of all others—hated to have this carefree girl see her in her shabby captivity. At last the tension was broken by the child, who waked and began to cry. Anna strove vainly to hush it, then picked it up from the cot.

"Guess he's hungry. I must make his food," she said.

"Let me hold him," said Ruth, rising to take the child.

Anna regarded her curiously, a softer expression on her face. She laid the baby in Ruth's arms. Now and again, as she busied herself over the lamp, she glanced at the visitor. The child's crying had stopped. It lay on Ruth's lap looking up into her face with solemn, unwinking eyes.

A pang of jealousy shot through Ruth's heart. She strove to imagine likeness to Dick in the round, chubby face, dreading to find it. A hard smile came to Anna's lips.

"I've named him Paul," she said, bending over the pan.

"Yes? I like the name," smiled Ruth.

"Paul Edgerton Meyer," said Anna, with defiant bitterness. "I gave him his father's name."

She poured the food into a bottle and snapped the rubber top on before looking up. The wave of color that swept over Ruth's face pleased her. Then the child's hungry yell stopped further conversation; both women had eyes only for the feeding operation. When it was over, the baby drowsed to sleep and was put into the cradle again.

"Queer, isn't it?" said Anna, her vindictiveness asserting itself again. "Queer that Mr. Pleydon should have picked you out, Miss Seton, as the friend to help me. I guess being away has put him a bit off what has been happening at Selborough. He didn't know what I have just told you, or he wouldn't have sent you. And he didn't tell me whom he was sending. If he had, I shouldn't have stopped him. You might as well know the kind of man you're going to marry, though I guess fine ladies don't count as anything wrong what happens to girls like me and babies like him. We tempted them, and they fell, like Eve did Adam, as they say. But there's the truth—that child is Paul Edgerton's just as much as if we had stood up before a minister in the holiest church."

"Why, you dear, wronged child!" said Ruth. "You are mistaken. I'm not going to marry Paul Edgerton."

"Not going to marry him?" answered Anna incredulously. "I was told—Why, he said as much to me when he went away."

"Then he made a mistake," replied Ruth.

"He asked you?" the other inquired in amaze.

"Yes," replied Ruth.

"And you turned down all that money?" It seemed incredible to Anna.

"There's something that comes before money," smiled Ruth.

"I'd like to know what?" said the little pagan. "Without it you are nothing; with it you can do anything."

"I'd have to lose something if I married Mr. Edgerton, and—well, I can't afford to lose it. Tell me, Anna, about Mr. Pleydon."

"Oh-h!" said the wise child woman, her eyes shining with friendliness. "I begin to catch on! Yes, I guess there are men worth more to a woman than bags of dollars—men you'd go through fire and water, hunger and the worst

trouble for. But there's the other kind like Paul Edgerton. Perhaps you can understand how it is? Lots of us, living hand to mouth, dream of a rich man. No more work behind a counter or waiting at tables. You can pitch the alarm clock into the garbage can, get up when you like, have servants and fine clothes, go about as you please, with money in your pocket.

"He gave me a flat, and I was a lady till he got tired of me. That's the trouble—we can catch them, but we can't hold them. We're just outsiders to be hidden away and be ashamed of. He got sick of me, though I tried my hardest to keep him. Then when he knew about the baby, he got mad, and I guess I was mad, too. He offered me some money to be rid of me, and I wouldn't take it, but got a job again, till I had to quit. It was six weeks after the baby was born before I could get round, and then work was hard to get. I couldn't get just the job that would fit in with the kid, there. Things got blacker and blacker, worse than I ever thought they could be."

She paused, her eyes looking dreamily before her.

"I went out that night. I had to have money. The child wanted food, and I was out of it. There was a man came and spoke to me." She stopped again with a little shudder. "He had the face of a sewer rat. It made me afraid, sick. Then I thought of that empty food bottle. I wanted forty-five cents for food for a millionaire's baby. I was on the block for auction, going, going—and the sewer rat the only bidder. And then Mr. Pleydon butted in and drove the rat thing away.

"I thought he was a ghost, for I'd heard that he had been killed over yonder. I hated him for interfering. If hell it had to be, why make a fuss whether to-day or next week? But he was good—sized it all up, humored me till I came out of my grouch, like the

book tales of the big brother. He knew I was in tough luck, and fifty dollars came in by messenger ten minutes after he'd gone. 'For the little chap,' the bit of paper said, just as if my baby was the same as married folks'!"

"And so he is, every bit as good and pretty and sweet," said Ruth.

"It's nice of you to say so, miss," answered Anna gratefully. "But when are you going to be married to Mr. Pleydon?"

"I don't know," replied Ruth. "I have to wait to be asked."

"Guess, from what I used to hear, he hasn't a barrel of money," said Anna suspiciously.

"No, and it's harder to get the right poor man than the wrong rich one," smiled Ruth a little sadly.

"Well, I'd get him if I was in your shoes," declared Anna. "I'd find him and settle it if it meant going on my knees all the way from here to Canada. I've no use for the storybook holding off and pretending and playing blind-man's buff. You've got to go after what don't come to you and hand pride a wallop over the ear to get it out of the way."

"I think you're probably right," sighed Ruth.

"You bet I am," asserted Anna. "There's that kid again, but he can't bluff or bawl more grub out of me for these two hours. You wouldn't believe it, miss, the foxiness of a chip like that, and him less than a year old."

And they talked baby till Ruth left.

VII.

It was a big, square, black-edged envelope, with a German stamp and bearing sundry cabalistic German marks, doubtless of the censor's origin. It was addressed to Fräulein Anna Meyer, in Edgerton's care. There was in its very appearance something of more than ordinary significance that

saved it from return to the postal authorities. It had been passed along from office boy to clerk, chief clerk, cashier, superintendent, and on the latter's desk old Mr. Edgerton saw it.

He was a brusquely aloof man, supposed to know nothing of the smaller cogs in his big machine, but there was little that escaped him. He examined the letter and understood that another man had paid toll to Kaiser Moloch. Inquiries in the department where Anna had formerly worked gave him an address in New York. So far as was known, she had no relatives in Selborough. He was going to New York that evening, so he slipped the letter into his pocket, saying he would see that it was delivered to her. Beneath a gruff, rugged exterior Edgerton had a kindly, sympathetic heart. He had sprung from the humbler classes—it was not very long since he had been a small shopkeeper, in close and friendly relations with his two assistants—and he still remained human. The thought of the girl, without relatives, receiving the death message alone moved him.

To Anna, he had always been an awe-inspiring personage, and when she saw him standing at the door of her room, her courage fled for a moment. The baby was kicking his heels on the bed, in great good humor, while Anna tidied up the room. Her first thought was that Miss Seton had told Mr. Edgerton all she knew.

"May I come in, Anna?" he asked. "It's a long time since I saw you in the store."

She placed a chair for him, scarce knowing what to say.

"I'm afraid I have no very good news for you," he continued. "There was a letter that came for you to the store and I happened to see it. We hunted round to find you and got a former address, and as I was coming to the city, I brought the letter with me

and traced you here. I wanted to be sure you received it."

"A letter?" she repeated dully.

"Yes, from overseas—Germany, I think—and I am afraid the news it brings is bad," he said. "You must try to be brave."

"I guess I know," she answered quietly. "I heard that he was dead."

He handed the letter to her, and she opened it. She knew enough of the language of her people to be able to make it out. Then she folded it up and put it into the envelope again.

"Yes, he's dead," she said. "But I knew it before."

Her calmness astonished him. He had feared distress and tears, but she was outwardly quite unmoved.

"He was a good man," she said at last, half reminiscently. "He worked in Mr. Pleydon's mill at Selborough, went home to Germany to see his parents, and was kept there to be a soldier. At one time we planned to get married. That was over two years back, when he went away."

The baby on the bed crowed lustily. Edgerton went over to it and began poking and tickling it, to its vast enjoyment.

"A lively youngster," he said. "Can it walk?"

"No, not yet. He's only just over a year old, and is rather slow," she answered.

"I don't know why you girls leave Selborough for New York," he said. "You're better off in a small town, where you have friends, than in this wilderness. Have you a good position?"

"Not just now," she answered. "But I have good prospects."

"Pull up stakes and come back to Selborough," he advised her in his good-natured growl. "We can find you something better than this."

"Didn't Miss Seton tell you?" she asked.

"Miss Seton?" he repeated. "No, I

haven't seen her for some time. Has she been to see you?"

"Yes. I thought perhaps she had said something to you," replied Anna. "No, Selborough wouldn't suit the baby and me. We're pretty much to ourselves here."

He understood. It was a difficult position, but he was doubly sorry for her, the butterfly with damaged wing on New York's swift-flowing stream. It was not difficult to see what the rest of the story would be. It was an old, tawdry tale—the bit of glittering bait, the snap, the hook, and the slow death; the brave, gay color of promise, the dull gray of fulfillment; the woman a fool, the man a rogue, with the fool having the long, bitter paying to do.

"What do you call the baby, Anna?" he asked.

She did not answer at once, but went over to the bed and picked the child up.

"I gave him his father's name," she said, pale and half defiant. "It was right he should have something of his father's, his name if nothing more. I called him Paul-Edgerton Meyer."

The old man's brows clouded blackly; fire came into his eyes under the beetling eyebrows. Rich men's sons were common blackmailing game.

"It's a lie!" he said angrily. Yet, as he looked at her, he felt that she had spoken the truth.

"Ask your son and look at the child," she answered sharply, no longer afraid of him.

He turned to go away.

"It's not true," he persisted, keeping his eyes away from the child.

"People always said you were a square man, Mr. Edgerton," she said. "Before you accuse me of lying, ask your son. I didn't invite you here and I'm setting up no claim against your pocket. It's always the woman's fault in these cases, and I was a fool. I turned away from the real man for

the fake. You wonder, maybe, I don't sorrow or cry about this," and she touched the letter. "I'm glad to know he suffered the lesser pain. Mr. Dick Pleydon, who saw him when he was dying, has written me a letter telling me about him. His last thought and word were of me, not knowing what I was or how I had betrayed him. If that were his baby, I could cry and sorrow because I should never see him again, but there would be gladness in the grief."

"If wrong has been done to you by my son, there shall be what reparation is possible," said Mr. Edgerton.

"There's nothing you can do," she replied. "If I took your son's money, I'd feel that he had bought me. I'll pay my own way for the wrong I did. Maybe it sounds foolish, but I'm going to try to be, as far as I can, what my dead man thought me. I made myself believe that I didn't care for him, but the worst of it is I did care. Perhaps God won't hurt him by letting him know what I was, and will only let him see what good is left in me and what love I bear him. Mr. Pleydon's father, who was my man's employer, is going to set me up in a little shop where I can sell the goods they make in the mill, and Miss Seton and some other ladies are going to help me to get trade, so I'll make my own way."

VIII.

"Ruth," said Judge Valentine suddenly, as the two sat together one evening in the Valentine home—she had dropped in to see the judge and his sister after a day's shopping in New York, and had stayed for dinner—"I saw Mr. Pleydon to-day, and we arranged to take a run up to Quebec in the car, starting to-morrow morning. My sister is going with us, and it occurred to me that you might come along and wish Dick good luck before he

starts out again. Would you care to make the trip?"

"Oh, I'd love to!" she said eagerly. "I can make all my arrangements to-night."

"I want to shake Dick's hand before he goes over," he added. "By the way, the evening papers give an account of the work that earned him his distinguished-service decoration. Selborough ought to be proud of him, and will be, but it's just as well that some Selborough folks should tell him so. I'll give the papers to you to dream over."

A few days later, Ruth stood at the window overlooking the St. Lawrence, old France in the New World about her, in all its picturesque beauty. She had seen, earlier in the day, regiments on their way overseas, grim, business-like, with little of the shoutings and cheerings of lesser and more emotional times; men with a great task on their hands, going forth greatly to discharge it, not the unwilling sweepings of a country, but its finest brain and brawn, each man a volunteer, leaving college, factory, courthouse, as one turns from minor tasks to a supreme one; in not a few cases laying aside great wealth and distinguished position for rifle and khaki, in order to stand squarely and answer straightly at the bar of the strong man's conscience. Loss? Yes, but by such loss nations live and humanity grows. Wastage? The wastage that is the precious price of all redemption. If words could have saved a world, there had been no need of Calvary.

The Valentines and Mr. Pleydon were out for an hour. Dick was not expected until evening. But in the midst of her thoughts, he unexpectedly came. The light leaped into his eyes as he saw her, sweet, gracious, all he had dreamed and much more in those crowded hours of a year's lifetime.

The glow of a great happiness irradiated her face as she laid her hands in his.

"I had hoped I might see you before I went back," he said. "Hoped and dreamed, but doubted."

"When do you go?" she asked.

"Any time now," he answered. "Now that I have seen you and am to see father and the Valentines, it seems easier. They're out, I hear?"

"Yes, they didn't expect you till evening," she said. "I've been sight-seeing all yesterday and this morning, and was a little tired."

"My great good luck," he laughed.

"And mine," she said happily. "So they found you out, Dick? I read about the honors in the newspapers, but you must tell me yourself. Newspapers may do for others, but Selborough has especial rights."

He still held her hand. There was questioning in the clear eyes that rested on hers. Then he lifted the hand that lay in his, white and ringless. She did not draw it away, and he raised it to his lips.

"I had heard——" he began.

"Heard what, Dick?" she asked.

"Is that true?" and he touched the finger.

She nodded and drew the hand away. There was laughter and love in her eyes, and they lighted a gleam in his own. For some moments they stood thus in silence.

"Dick," she said, with the suspicion of a sigh, "you almost make me wonder about the winning of that decoration. What do the reports say? For signal enterprise and gallant initiative in face of—the enemy?"

"It's so wonderful, dear, I can hardly believe my good fortune," he whispered, and the "gallant initiative" returned to him as he gathered her closely to him.

A week later she stood on the pier

watching the transport that bore her husband back to his task disappear into the gray gloom of evening. She gazed silently, tearlessly, on her face a new beauty, an added fineness. She was now a giver to the world, not a taker merely; its burden, its cross had been laid on her heart. Mr. Pleydon stood by her side, Valentine and his sister near by. The old judge put his arm through hers as the ship faded into

the mists and was gone. She looked up smilingly.

"I'm doing my bit, Uncle Jim. It hurts—hurts terribly. But I'm glad, proud, more than I can tell," she said.

So through the red and the gray, the darkness and pain, the agony and bloody sweat, the soul at last comes to the white sunshine of Easter morning shining eternally on the finished redemption.



MORNING AT SEA

OUT of the constant East, the breeze
 Brings morning like a wafted rose
 Across the glimmering lagoon,
 And wakes the still palmetto trees,
 And blows adrift the phantom moon
 That paler and still paler glows.

*Up with the anchor! Let's be going!
 O hoist the sail, and let's be going!
 Glory and glee
 Of the morning sea—
 Ah, let's be going!*

Under our keel a glass of dreams
 Still fairer than the morning sky;
 A jewel shot with blue and gold,
 The swaying clearness streams 'and gleams,
 A crystal mountain smoothly rolled
 O'er magic gardens flowing by.

*Over we go the sea fans waving,
 Over the rainbow corals paving
 The deep-sea floor.
 No more, no more,
 Would I seek the shore
 To make my grave in,
 O sea fans waving!*

RICHARD LE GALLIENNE.



A Quiet English Home

By Phyllis Bottome

Author of "The Dark Tower," etc.



IT was the quietest place in the world. You began with a drive long enough to muffle the noises of the road and short enough to present you almost immediately with the shrubbery entrance to the lawn.

The lawn was large, and soft as a thick-pile carpet, and very, very green.

It bore different shades of this essential color all the year round. In the spring, it was emerald and shone with the uncanny, flamelike hardness of that jewel; in the summer, it was a gray green, as if the sun had drunk its sharpness out of it; autumn brooded over it with a veil of gossamer dew-drops, till it was the color of an apple leaf; in winter, it was just green, plain, dull green, stimulated by rains and undaunted by slight scatterings of snow. It was a very old lawn and it had chosen that color several hundred years ago.

The lawn was the center of the place. It was very large and had a magnificent 'dark-green-velvet cedar tree in the middle of it. In all probability, the cedar tree was slightly older than the lawn.

The cedar tree had black fantail pigeons under its special shelter. Against the background of the green lawn, they looked almost too post-impressionistic, but this was corrected by their habits, which were reactionary to the point of feudalism.

The house—several had been built on the same foundation—was more or less modern. It was a low, long, intensely comfortable house. It would not have worried Ruskin.

There was good furniture in it, but it wasn't made to show off good furniture—it wasn't made to show off at all. It was made to live in, quietly, continuously, comfortably, on several thousands a year. To the right of it, was a flower garden, with bowers of roses, herbaceous borders, and grass paths. It had a ridge that ran behind the shrubbery, where the paths were made of old, irregular tiles, and on the top of the ridge was a water-lily pond, where goldfish survived, gleamingly and fatly, the occasional raids of a turquoise kingfisher. He was a splendid fellow, and took his meals in spurts of blue flame, between the water lilies.

To the left of the lawn was another shrubbery leading to a stable. A winner of the Derby would not have scorned its stalls. The floor was covered with fine tiles like an Egyptian princess' bathroom, and it was more spotless than it is probable a very early Egyptian princess' bathroom would ever have been. No one could have minded eating off the floor; the horses themselves didn't, though mangers of precisely the right height and depth had been carefully provided for them.

There were seven hunters, and they had been picked up carefully from Dublin horse shows, or after several inconspicuous, guarded visits to Tattersall's on sale days. Then they were brought to the blue-tiled stables, with admirable painted woodwork, loose boxes, spotless harness, and sweet-scented hay.

No man laid his hand upon them save by way of kindness, and their skins shone as perhaps the Egyptian princess did, after she had taken "her bath of scented milk, delicately waited on."

There were innumerable other animals on the place—Jersey cows, goats, a box of sinuous and inquisitive ferrets, and several fox terriers. The fox terriers were perfect gentlemen; they never ran chickens after they were a year old, and they knew instinctively whether you had a right to be on the lawn or not.

But the house revolved primarily about the horses.

You approached them after breakfast.

You had family prayers first, and if you did not directly allude to the horses in these prayers, it was because they were naturally included among the members of "this Thy household."

The whole household—except the horses, and including the fox terriers—knelt round the breakfast table for prayers.

The table was covered with fresh eggs, honey, and wonderful silver dishes kept hot by spirit lamps; over all, on the sideboard, brooded a cold, stately, flavoursome Yorkshire ham. After you had prayed, listened to a chapter of the Bible, and eaten the ham, you went to see the horses.

Each horse in its loose box whinnied with welcome and pawed its well-shod feet with the frank impatience of joy. It knew it was going to be admired, given sugar, and possibly eventually mounted.

If mounted, it would go—it knew just how it would go, for it was made of velvet and steel. It might hear the exultant voices of hounds, leap hedges, cross fields as if they were pocket handkerchiefs, and do admirable things with ditches and over the top bars of gates. It would get in at the death if it could, and shiver and tremble with panic and delight, and feel its neck patted, and be ridden very gently home again, rubbed down, and fed with special excellence by its groom, and feel that it knew how to behave in its sphere and liked it, and was liked for it, which is the best thing that can happen to any living creature.

There were three men in the house who behaved as much as possible in the same way as the horses; that is to say, they knew their jobs and did them, and were made extremely comfortable afterward.

One woman undertook the job of making them comfortable, which she accomplished without visible effort, and threw in the care of a chicken farm as well. They were a family who understood work, animals, and comfort. It was a pleasure to stay with them. They were seldom upset unless something went wrong with one of the animals. They were never upset with each other, and they were seldom upset by anybody else, though they did not like the vicar to introduce novelties in the church.

This was before the war.

For a long time after the war, it was the least changed home in the country.

It would not have a Sunday paper. It never had had a Sunday paper, and it thought the news could wait.

I am not sure how far, as a family, it believed that there were Germans. But as it read the *Morning Post* on week days, it was probable that even before the war it had dimly realized that there was an efficient, despicable race of people called a "menace," which

we should have to fight sooner or later unless they were careful; and in 1914 they were not very careful. After that there were the Belgians. Then the house gave up four hunters and one son and settled down to it. It saw that the war was going to be a nuisance, but it knew how to deal with nuisances; it did not take too much notice of them.

A few months later, it decided to give up the other son. The other three hunters were kept, but their lives became very dull and unnatural. They got their visits, the lumps of sugar, and a sufficient amount of exercise, but they did not hunt. They went out with grooms and came back with grooms; finally with only one groom because the others had joined the sons. Only the old master came to see them. He was not really old, but he was older than the two mysteriously vanished young masters, and he did not seem to want to ride any more. He wanted to take care of the horses till the young masters came back. That is what he said. But well-bred horses know the inflections of the human voice they love, and they did not think the old master was quite certain about the young masters coming back. He was not at this time quite certain of anything, except the house, the lawn, the animals, and the woman who made him comfortable. War or no war, she was just the same, as he knew that women should be; for though you never understand them, and do not at all times have an equal value for them, the good of their kind are the most certain things on earth.

"For steadiness," the master of the house had often said, "get a good mare."

At first, neither of them thought much about the Zeppelins. They laughed over them and fancied that they were a cross between a dachshund and a sausage, with a few firecrackers thrown in. Then special constables

came to tea and talked to them, and because they were essentially a reasonable couple, when they understood that Zeppelins were tiresome as well as funny, they darkened the house as their neighbors did, and saw the animals to bed before night came, and had dinner as usual, and read whatever letters came from the vanished sons out loud, and shifted little flags on maps, and decided how much butter, eggs, and milk they would give weekly to their hospital; for they had started a small hospital and they were going to give it exactly what it needed and no more. It was not the only thing they had started and they never gave up anything they had once begun, so they had to be careful; and when they had been careful, they went to bed.

It was a heavy autumn night. The mist lay in fold on fold; it crept up the long, low meadows, reached the lawn, and passed the cedar tree. There were no stars. The air was very still. Around the water-lily pond, the pine trees did not drop a quill. They stood like lifted swords pointing upward. In the stables, the horses whinnied uneasily. They knew all about stillness. There is the kind of silence that means nothing is going to happen except sleep, and there is the kind of silence that means everything is going to happen except sleep.

However, nobody paid any attention to them—not even the fox terriers, who usually started barking when the horses whinnied, just to be on the safe side and because a bark in time saves nine.

Across the heavy clouds, the searchlights crossed and recrossed each other like rapiers. Sometimes they gave their duel up and just prodded thoughtfully at the dull sky. They never ceased to point and dart and parry, though everything in the world was still and the clouds empty.

And then, far off, a little murmur crept into the air; it was like a pulse

beating—not very strongly nor very continuously. It grew louder, as if the heart behind the pulse had become stronger.

The air was full of it now, a distinct, violent throbbing. The searchlights shot hither and thither about the sky, frantic in their thrusts and parries. There was a crash or two, as if somebody had inadvertently dropped a heavy parcel.

The fox terriers led all the village dogs in a hurricane of barks. They never thought of economy now. Their voices sprang outraged upon the night, tearing its quietness to pieces. Even the goats gave erratic baritone bleatings. The master of the house went out to the stables, and the mistress put on her dressing gown and slippers and went to her maids. They said gently to each other, without comment:

"That sounds like those tiresome Zeppelins."

The house was blotted out in darkness; there was not the flicker of a light anywhere. All its inhabitants leaned out of the dark of their rooms, over the quiet lawn.

They could hear, above the barking of the dogs, the coughing of the guns around London. The noise above grew steadily fuller and louder, and the searchlights, for all their stabbing and leaping, had not found it.

From a neighboring aërodrome, the little light birds of the air shot up into the darkness. Lights trailed and darted out behind them, and from the upper darkness of the sky, a rain of fiery arrows fell.

They were up; they were on the trail; they were hunting—small St. Georges against the giant dragon of the sky!

The master of the house hastened to the horses. He said, "All right in there?" and the groom answered a little shakily, for he had had to do his watch-

ing in the dark, "Yes, sir. I just dropped in to look, sir."

"Quite right," said the master cheerfully. "But it's no use moving them till we see where we are."

Nobody saw where they were. There was no light but the golden arrows and the long, mounting shafts of the searchlights.

A hoarse cheer sounded and those who watched from the darkened windows saw behind the cedar on the lawn a great red ball. It needed no searchlight now. It hung staggeringly, a vast crimson circumference like the globe of a sinking sun. There were black dots moving in it, and then nothing moved in it but the flames. There was no sound now, for the coughing had stopped. It floated toward the old green lawn, covering it with a fire of black ash and burning scraps of canvas that fell upon the water-lily pond.

The garden flowers were all alight like flowers upon a stage. The stiff pines shone molten gold. The vivid yellow light seized the house; it held the master and the groom beside the stable door. The horses screamed, for they knew all about fire. The fox terriers howled, for they had always suspected the moon of coming down and eating them up, and there she was—swaying, gold and fiery red, above their very kennels. There was another sound now—the shriek of shells flying past the house, tearing up the grass under the cedar tree, outraging the black fantail pigeons.

"By George, it's-coming close!" said the master of the house. "Get inside the stable, John. Cover the horses' heads, and stay with 'em. Shells too lively for them to be safe out here. I'm going back to the women."

The groom urged him respectfully—though in that awful, noisy glare it was difficult even for a groom to be respectful—to take shelter and not to

cross the fiery lawn. The master of the house said a little curtly:

"Nip in, John, and attend to those horses."

Then he crossed the lawn. It was usually such a very simple thing to do, to stroll on a summer's night over the velvety darkness. There was no darkness now; every blade of grass shone luridly, and the air knew no stillness. The shells whined and coughed and shrieked like a company of invisible lunatics.

Nothing moved in the house.

The master walked steadily across the lawn, because if the house was struck, he ought to be there, and because he was not going to be stopped by shells from crossing his own lawn.

The guns stopped as he reached the door. They had sighted from far away the falling of their prey. There was no sound at all. The drifting monster swayed in a sheet of flame over the house. It looked like a burning dragon held together by the flames. And then it dropped—separating slowly into two gigantic fires—upon the empty fields.

It had passed the house and missed the cedar by a miracle.

The master of the house met his wife in the hall. She wore one of the

sons' overcoats and a cricket cap. Otherwise, she looked as usual.

"I was just coming to look for you, dear," she said. "I hope the horses are all right?"

"Quite," said the master. "But I'm afraid the lawn's in an awful mess. Something dropped under the cedar tree as I was passing. I don't quite know what it was—but I'd rather you didn't go out there. I think the maids had better make the kitchen fire up. They're sure to send soldiers to guard the wreckage, and they'll be glad of a cup of tea. Of course it's rather an awkward time for the maids to be up."

And she said, "The big copper is already on, dear. I thought it might save time if the house wasn't burned down, and I've just been setting the table for the special constables in the dining room."

The master of the house gave a sigh of relief. His world had been within an ace of destruction, but the center of it had remained imperturbably intact. He hesitated for a moment, because it was not time to say good night—nor was it time to say good morning. Still, he kissed her.

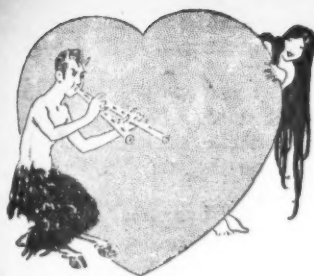
Then he went out to find what had fallen under the cedar on the lawn.



A SONG OF SEEKING

THERE must be fish in the sea, else why
 Do the wild white sea birds dive and fly?
 There must be sweets where the flowers swing,
 Else why do the wild bees thither wing?
 There must be love in your heart for me
 Else why—oh, why—do I come to thee?

MILDRED WAUGH.



SORCERY

By John Fleming Wilson

Author of "The Man Who Came Back," etc.

AT some time in his life, I fancy, he had really been an honorable—the Honorable T. News Newlin, of some decent Irish family. The evidence of this was conclusive enough to convince Captain Bayliss, of the steam schooner *Northern Lights*, and Bayliss carried the mail from Valdez up for six years.

"The man's letters were addressed from some British port, and the 'Honorable' was always before his name, usually in a sloping, lady's hand," he told me. "Up where he has his factory, he got a fresh title, because he's a queer kind of brute, and nobody ever gets the better of him. Down the coast you'll once in a while hear a smart shipping clerk or a sarcastic purser sneer the 'Honorable' as if it were a joke. But in his own district, which is several degrees of latitude and longitude across, they stick the title to his name with respect."

"Do you believe in Newlin's magical powers?" I demanded, when I first spoke with Bayliss about the man who was afterward to become a great personage in my life. And the *Northern Lights'* skipper never answered me directly. He intimated that strange things happen, especially in a land where the cold is enduring, and the nights are as long as seasons, and there is too much fish to eat.

"Men talk," Bayliss said vaguely. "The fact that Newlin can find otter

where even the Indians can't get a pelt once in two years, and his regularly sending down forty thousand dollars' worth of the fur to be shipped to London and the auction, may look like magic to some. But there! It's not the only odd thing about him!"

"As what?" I demanded.

Bayliss stared at me a moment.

"Why do men of sorts go up and beg him for a job?" he said reluctantly. "All kinds of men do that—fellows who swear they hate Newlin and his works. What's the big attraction up in his factory?"

I offered a suggestion based on slim hearsay.

"There is a girl up there off Otter Cape," Bayliss admitted. "But nobody but the Indians ever laid eyes on her. Guess again! The Honorable T. News Newlin has several secrets, I reckon!"

A year after that, I met Adrian Deftford in Colón.

As I grow older, I find entertainment and instruction in observing the almost daily phenomenon of those meetings between strangers which we call accidental. You start out of a fine morning to do a simple errand, miss one street car, walk a block to catch another, swing up on the rear step, and look straight into the eyes of a man you never saw before. Fifteen minutes later, he digs into a pocket and hauls out a card which he awkwardly hands you, with a brief "Just tell our mutual

friend Smith you saw me. My name and address."

You empocket the card and go your way. A week later, Smith laughs when you mention meeting a chap called Jones, and tells you a bit of Jones' history. You aren't interested, and proceed to forget Jones. But the great universal force of attraction has changed your orbit a little in response to the entrance of Jones, and a month, a year, or ten years later, Jones re-enters, to become the moment's biggest figure in your life.

Adrian Deptford was no man to alter histories or to interfere with the due sequence of human events. A wanderer, a vagabond, a carefree sport of the winds of chance, he was as incidental as a gust of wind, as incalculable as the spiral of a puff of smoke, and as little to be counted on as a shadow floating across a lawn. I had to be shipmates with him for five months in the old bark *Argo* before I knew his name, and three times thereafter he had to introduce himself before I recalled him to memory. True, he was an excellent sailorman, a fine figure of youth and health, and a first-class messmate.

Then coincidence, chance, or destiny—I am no sectarian in the matter—threw us together in the half deck of the British freighter *Gibraltar*. The freighter died a natural death in the sweep of the Gulf Stream, and Adrian and I got acquainted during six days in an open boat. But when we had been picked up by the Old Dominion liner *Hamilton* and landed in Norfolk, I didn't know his religion, his politics, his age, previous condition of servitude, or expectations from rich relatives.

Four months later, I scratched my head, and looked at John Stange—this was on the embarcadero in San Francisco—and said:

"Deptford? Deptford? Hanged if I remember anybody by that name!"

John repeated it: "Adrian Deptford—shipmates with you in the *Gibraltar*, he told me."

"Sure!" I said heartily. "Of course I know him! A fellow with a thick, yellow mustache, who does his ready reckoning on the three fingers of his left hand."

Stange nodded vigorously.

"The very man. Blew into my shop and mentioned the fact that you were wrecked together. Proper kind of sailorman, so I——"

Who is John Stange to palter with me? I pinned him down with a severe forefinger.

"Come through," I insisted. "You didn't give him that Alaska berth you promised me?"

"Well," he replied, "he seemed to be a friend of yours, and you hadn't turned up, and so I said to myself——"

"Cut it short," I put in. "What did you say to him?"

"I told him Newlin needed a first-chop mate for his schooner *Sea Otter*, and staked him to passage north with Bayliss," Stange said offendedly. "I thought I was doing a favor to a particular friend of yours."

"The drinks are on me," I returned, with proper apologies. "He is a friend of mine. I'd forgotten the fact. I remember now. So he's gone up north to work for the Honorable T. News Newlin, has he? Well, I'd been expecting to take that job myself. However——"

Stange wrinkled his brows.

"Newlin is fussy," he murmured. "He is always complaining of not getting gentlemen on his ships. Your friend struck me as quite the gentleman, you know."

I considered Deptford in the light of this remark, and my mind was illuminated. Adrian was undoubtedly—now that I came to think of it—what John would call a "gentleman," in spite of his odd fashion of constantly do-

ing small reckonings on the three remaining fingers of his left hand. Men with university degrees have been known to have habits as uncouth. And Deptford had other stigmata, such as a very smooth, even voice, an absurdly articulate enunciation of uncommon words, and a pleasant way of being courteous and civil during emergencies. Certainly the man was a gentleman, though a sailor. Funny I'd never noticed it. It was evident that Adrian was really no chance acquaintance. Probably he had done me a great favor by claiming intimate friendship.

"Then I suppose my job with Newlin is still open," I remarked.

John seemed relieved.

"Of course. Not that there is anything special Newlin wants a man for just now," he said. "But I'll send you up. Bayliss sails to-morrow."

The next day Bayliss and I settled down in his little cabin to cribbage, a thousand points a game.

"I've been thinking over that last set-to we had," the skipper of the *North-ern Lights* remarked as he broke matches up for pegs. "And if you remember, I missed one for his nobs that time the mate thought he saw a green light on the starboard bow."

"Three years gone by," I said, ruffling the cards. "I beat you by eight points in five thousand. Your cut."

"If I missed it once, that is plain proof that I probably missed it several times before," Bayliss insisted. "It's by no means sure that I was the loser."

He went into the psychology of the matter at some length. He is an excellent fellow and a first-rate mariner, but his officers find him insistent on points that no other living man would think of twice. I'd learned his way and changed the subject.

"Seen Deptford since you took him up to work for Newlin?"

"Once," Bayliss replied, triumphantly

taking two for thirty-one. "Quite a gentlemanly chap."

"Does he get along with the Honorable T. News Newlin?" I demanded.

"First class, I believe," was the answer. "Captain Deptford mentioned knowing you."

I pulled out John Stange's letter and showed Bayliss the address.

The Honorable T. News Newlin,
Otter Cape, Alaska.

Then I extract the contents, unsealed, and called attention to the odd wording of it.

"Stange has known me for eight years," I remarked. "Adrian Deptford wanders in a few days ago, mentions my name, and gets my job. John says it's because Adrian is a particular friend of *mine*. Then I come along to see John, and this is the letter I get:

DEAR MR. NEWLIN: I'm sending you with this a friend of Captain Deptford's who will fit in somewhere with you, I think. Captain Deptford spoke very highly of this gentleman, whom I know to be a competent man with unlimited mate's license and honest. Very resp'y,
J. STANGE.

"Now," said I, "will you explain how it comes that Adrian not only gets my job—he a stranger and I an old pal—but that when I get a position, I get it on Deptford's recommendation? What is there about Deptford that men like John Stange take his *ipse dixit* right off, while an old friend like me—"

"There!" said Bayliss. "I knew you reminded me of Captain Deptford. He said '*ipse dixit*' when I pegged one for his nobs."

"Another thing," I went on. "The job was a mate's job. Why do you call him *Captain* Deptford?"

"Mr. Newlin liked his looks and fired old 'Syracuse Joe' on the spot," Bayliss answered, looking critically at his hand. "You know Mr. Newlin likes class."

The word jarred me into a fresh review of my acquaintance with Adrian,

and I was again enlightened. There was no doubt that Deptford had that indefinable air which goes as "class." I put John's letter quietly back into my pocket.

Later, I mentioned the delicate matter of the young lady reputed to be hidden beyond Otter Cape. Bayliss betrayed uneasiness about touching the subject, and gave me to understand that Newlin was an uncommonly successful fur trader, a prompt settler of all bills, and no man to run counter to.

"And if it's curiosity that's taking you north, I'd advise that you be content with what you can hear in San Francisco," he concluded.

I took the hint, said no more, and beat my host by ninety points. Yet I mused a great deal over Newlin, the mystery of his astonishing success, and the still darker secret of his ability to draw into his service capable and selfish men who, so far as my information ran, never shared in the prosperity they promoted. Indeed, if there was a grain of truth in gossip, men who had taken his pay too often perished in the ultimate North. And the girl—what had she to do with all this? Wife? Daughter? Slave?

Off No Man's Cape, Deptford met the *Northern Lights* with the *Sea Otter*, and welcomed me gravely. It appeared that he expected me.

"I left word for them to send you along," he remarked vaguely.

Bayliss dumped a few tons of freight out of his forehold and reported cryptically on a certain piano which, it appeared, should have been on the bill, but had not been delivered to the ship. Then the *Sea Otter* hauled away, and Adrian briefly informed me that I was mate of her.

"It's really your job," he explained. "When I arrived, I told Mr. Newlin that and said I'd keep it open for you."

"Thanks," I said cordially.

Adrian waved gratitude away.

"You and I are old pals," he remarked. "I'm glad to have you along with me."

"How do you like the Honorable T. News?" I inquired.

Deptford thought this a fair question.

"He's the kind of chap you always want to have another man's opinion on," he admitted. "He struck me as an odd fish. First off, he stared at me and asked me how the devil I got up here and what I expected. I told him bluntly I expected decent treatment. He grinned, and we've had no trouble at all. Not that we're friends, like you and I are, you know. He isn't the kind to make up to. Most men are afraid of him."

"I've heard lots of chatter about his being a magician," I remarked. "You know how superstitious men are about a man in this God-forsaken land who is uniformly successful in hunting and trading."

"There is something queer about him," Deptford acknowledged. "And he has a secret, of course."

"The girl?"

Adrian was heartily provoked with me.

"I know nothing about any young lady," he growled. "I'm referring to the extraordinary fact that, each year regularly, Mr. Newlin sends down for shipment to the London auction market twenty-six sea-otter pelts, neither more nor less. Sea otter are not only scarce, but hard to kill. I fancy that in all the Northern Pacific, not over a dozen are captured by professional hunters in a twelvemonth. And nobody can figure how Mr. Newlin gets the ones he sends out."

"You mean to say no one knows how he catches them?"

"Exactly. Once each year he goes off by himself in his power sloop and comes back two months later with the

skins," Adrian told me. "Thirty thousand dollars' worth each season!"

"That sounds magical to me," I murmured.

Deptford smiled.

"I don't blame you. But you'd better take advice and not inquire too closely. They say people who try to find out too much—well, they don't show up in San Francisco again to talk about it."

"And yet," I said, at a venture, "we're both of us here, and we wouldn't be here if we didn't hope to——"

Adrian shook his head. He would admit to a little curiosity, at first. But it had passed. He wasn't staying on in any hopes of finding out about the otter.

"You and I are friends," he said, "and I've made it no secret from you that I have other notions than simply working for money." There he dropped the subject, leaving me to ask myself: Had he? What notions?

I pondered this for a day and a night. By Jove, the man took it for granted that I knew him well! He spoke as old chums do, with huge ellipses of meaning that I must supply out of a fund of long and intimate association. And what were these "other notions" he had had and confided to me?

Laboriously I sought them out, and finally discovered a little hoard in my forgotten memories—a casual conversation we had exchanged when our open boat, after the *Gibraltar's* loss, had become a sinister craft on which all were dead but us two. I recalled the dark, blustery night when the short, tripping surges of the tepid Gulf Stream steamed before the gusty nor'easter and tossed our frail refuge to the occasional stars. Yes, Adrian had spoken then of certain obscure plans he had formulated during a career of apparently purposeless wandering. The brief sentences, once memory had seized on the scene again, rang once more in my ear:

"You think it's funny I want to steer north when we have a fair wind for the south. I've always told myself I'd sail north if it was my say-so. I'm sick of the South. No hidden women there. Bold as the sun, they are. No mystery at all. I want things to happen before I catch my breath. If we didn't know this world so well, we'd all instinctively sail north as the needle points. Birds fly north."

These few sentences struck me now as significant, of course, but still rather a meager epitome of what Adrian chose to term my intimate, friendly acquaintance with his thoughts. However, it was a clew to his present plans and I ventured to use it. Adrian nodded when I remarked, "You were always anxious to go north." This was only an hour before we were to round Otter Cape and swing up the inlet where Newlin had his station.

"Exactly," he responded. "You understand me perfectly. Of course, I can't explain to everybody. But I reckon each one of us has a certain object in life. Never can tell how we get it! But for several years I've felt that my luck or destiny of fate meant for me to go clean north. You understand, don't you?" he went on anxiously.

"A feeling," I said.

"More," Adrian answered, tapping his breast with his maimed left hand. "A dragging in my chest, just about the heart." He searched my face with his brooding eyes. "Just as if there were a magnetic needle there, always pointing to the north. I'm—I'm wretched if I have to turn south."

"Oh, well," I responded. "You'll get enough of it before long."

Adrian seemed lost in a muse.

"They tell me that beyond Point Barrow——" he began presently.

"Point Barrow!" I interrupted him scornfully. "What the dickens do you think you'd find up in the Arctic?"

"Well," he said hesitatingly, "no ship that was once caught in the ice past Barrow ever got back. I have a notion——"

I wanted plain speaking.

"Do you know of anything in particular up there that would make it worth while?"

Adrian was offended.

"No. Just a hunch, a feeling. I never would have spoken of it except to an old friend."

A rain squall cleared up, and Otter Cape became, from a dark shadow, a clear-cut headland, clothed with purple-green firs that mounted in close-set ranks from the clayey shore to the gloomy heights. The schooner rushed up to the surf booming on the few scattered rocks at its foot, wore swiftly, and plunged up a long, narrow inlet into which white cascades fell on either hand. Salmon leaped in the spume where they hissed into the sea and a few dull-colored gulls swooped and swung in the cold breeze.

"What will Newlin say to my coming?" I inquired idly.

"He'll be anxious about the piano," Adrian replied. "He hates to be put off—has no patience with people who don't live up to their bargains. He'll be short-tempered to-day."

"A piano? Who's the instrument for? The young lady?"

Deptford shook his head impatiently.

"Don't know," he said. "Don't know of any woman up here at all."

"Oh!" I said sagaciously and pursed my lips.

The Honorable T. News Newlin was on the little pier when we swung alongside to the pull of a launch that met us. He was a tall, angular man of middle age, with a dark and sardonic face. His gray eyes glowed coldly on us. Adrian insisted on shaking hands.

"Got everything?" Newlin demanded in a bored tone.

"Except that piano," was the reply. "Bayliss said——"

Newlin scowled faintly.

"Since when has it been Captain Bayliss' business to say anything about my affairs?"

Adrian smiled.

"He merely said it hadn't been delivered to his ship at sailing time."

"Ah!" said Newlin crisply. "That's businesslike. Get the rest of the stuff into the warehouse and sail to-night for San Francisco and get that piano."

"You talk as if the voyage in this schooner were an overnight affair," Deptford returned, just as crisply. "It would take at least two months to make the round trip. Bayliss will be back before I could so much as get there."

"Wire from Valdez," Newlin said curtly. "I'm done with Bayliss. He bores me. Tell him not to touch another pound of my freight."

This struck me as rather absurd, and I suppose my face showed my feeling. Newlin turned on me, cold as ice, and lifted an eyebrow.

"Wished on me by the excellent Bayliss?" he said in a perfectly calm voice.

I was fishing for John Stange's letter, but Adrian interposed with a brief "Old friend of mine, sir. I spoke to you about him once. He's shipped with me as mate."

"What luck!" said Newlin insultingly.

"Great luck for you," said Deptford, putting an edge on his voice.

"What do you mean by that?" demanded Newlin.

"I mean that it has suddenly occurred to me that I don't like your manner," Adrian replied. "You aren't used to dealing with men like me, so I'm quitting right now and here. My friend will take your schooner."

The man seemed mightily upset for the moment, and muttered apologies. Adrian was firm.

"I've figured for ten minutes that you

weren't the man for me," he said. "It's evident that I'm not the man for you."

"But I've got nobody else!" was the response.

"You've got *him*," Deptford said, pointing at me.

"I see what sticks in your throat," Newlin answered, with a sudden assumption of good humor. "You think you're entitled to rest after this voyage and take it ill I should send you south for a piano."

"I'll run a ship, but I won't run foolish errands for any man's spite," Adrian said. "You get angry with the people you ordered the piano from and proceed to take it out of Captain Bayliss' pocket and my skin. I'll work for no man who uses so little common sense. The time would come, sooner or later, when I'd be up against it with him."

"You are quite right, captain," Newlin admitted coldly. "I offer apologies. You will *not* sail south for that piano, nor will your friend, here. You must excuse me. I've been used for years to dealing with crooks and fools, and my manner is not all that it should be."

"All right, sir," Adrian said cheerfully. "Apologies accepted."

Though outwardly satisfied, it seemed to me that Mr. Newlin studied Deptford pretty carefully during the supper that followed in his comfortable cabin, whose walls were lined with guns, rods, and trophies. Adrian was unconscious of this scrutiny and ate and chatted at ease. Either Newlin was finally satisfied, or some fresh thought entered his mind, for he suddenly abandoned our companion and talked with me. He inquired particularly, in a careless tone, about our old acquaintance—what I knew of Deptford—and concluded by plumping out:

"I always wonder what men like our skipper, here, expect to do."

"Where?" I asked.

"Exactly," said Newlin. "We all

have some place in mind for our grand climax. Now I"—he leaned forward with every indication of being confidential—"hope eventually to end my days under the equator."

"Deptford told me long ago he knew he should sooner or later go north and stay there," I returned.

Quick as a wink, my host swung round to Adrian, who was lying back in a long chair and blowing his cigar smoke to the low ceiling.

"What do you expect to do in the Far North, captain?"

Deptford brought his gaze down for an instant and replied dreamily:

"I have a notion I'll make a strike up there."

Newlin smiled.

"A man of your education? Bury yourself in a blank world?"

Adrian smiled back, pleased at the compliment.

"Well, it appeals to me. Somehow I miss what I want when I'm among—down among people."

"Yes, yes! I understand, captain!" Newlin leaned forward and fixed his sardonic gray eyes on him. "A wise man knows his way, doesn't he? He looks about him and says to himself, 'Gad, this isn't the place!' and moves on. I've studied the matter myself at considerable length, and I find that all of us who have any perception of the meaning of life recognize the need of energy to reach after what we really want. For example, I have brains enough to make a fortune anywhere. I picked this country because, in spite of its drawbacks, it suits me. I take it you feel what I do—the possibilities of this region."

"I do!" Adrian cried. "I've tried the whole world—and I always find myself turning north."

Newlin nodded as if in perfect comprehension.

"I was telling your friend, here, that I think the tropics will be my final stop-

ping place. *You* know—warmth and life and color. I have plenty of money. I fancy we are agreed that money is necessary?"

"Quite," I said.

Adrian merely nodded absently and fell a-dreaming again.

Presently the Honorable T. News Newlin fell silent, as well, and I devoted myself to an old copy of an English magazine, while the rain pattered on the roof and hissed down the chimney into the fire. I cannot tell you how far away and distasteful appeared the perils and vicissitudes I had experienced. I must have unconsciously spoken my thought aloud, for I started up to see Newlin's eyes fixed on mine and to hear his cool voice saying:

"By Jove, the man is purring like a cat! He's satisfied, Deptford! Actually, our friend, here, this minute is thinking that he hasn't another thing to wish for than this fire, his pipe, and an old book." He laughed harshly.

They stared at me curiously, and I had the uncomfortable sense of being made fun of. Then Adrian rose and stretched himself.

"After all, Mr. Newlin, I believe I'll quit you and be moving on," he said.

The other rose, also, and laid a brown hand familiarly on Deptford's shoulder.

"Going north!" he said loudly. "Good for you! I thought you were that kind of man. All right! Let your friend, here, have the schooner. How would you like to be my partner—in a bonanza, captain?"

Adrian's eyes lit up. His heavy mustache bristled.

"You know something worth while?" he cried.

"Something most worth while," Newlin responded grimly. "For a man with sand enough to risk all for all."

"A secret? Your secret?" Adrian

demanding, starting to pace back and forth.

"One of my secrets," answered Newlin. "In a way, it's no secret, of course. Every one knows no ship that gets caught in the pack and carried past Point Barrow ever comes back."

"The *Narvak*," Adrian muttered. "She came back seven times."

"With a crew of darkies who knew nothing but that they were sheltered from the cold on her," Newlin returned. "And she hadn't a thing worth any man's while aboard of her. But the *Singing Master*—"

Deptford stopped in mid career.

"Two million dollars' worth—"

"Exactly!" snapped the other. "She vanished in the snow and fog beyond Barrow and no man ever ventured after her. Now I—"

Suddenly Adrian looked up and there was a queer catch in his breath. He appeared to do a reckoning on the three fingers of his left hand. When he spoke, it was in a new tone.

"How many men have you sent after the *Singing Master*?" he asked. "There was Bob Patrine and Bob Sedgwick and Ike Reynolds sailed north on some errand and disappeared. They worked for you—once. Did you send 'em after the *Singing Master*?"

"They went," was the answer, given in a significant voice.

"Hanged good men, too," Adrian continued. "I've heard talk." He stared at our host with somber eyes. "You must have made it worth their while."

With a comical gesture of embarrassment, Newlin turned to me.

"My unlucky reputation!" he murmured. "Anybody will assure you those gentlemen were able to take care of themselves. Nobody ever suggested they needed a guardian. They took a business risk—that was all. Why, I wasted a hundred thousand dollars; all in all, fitting 'em out. No return on

my investment, yet I haven't complained. And here I suggest to Captain Deptford—a likely young man with a taste for adventure—that there is a fortune waiting the right man. And he gets suspicious of my intentions!"

Adrian made a definitive movement with his left hand, as if he had completed his reckoning.

"No matter," he said. "If it's worth your risking your coin, I'm your man. I know your special kind of man, Mr. Newlin, and I'll call your hand. Did you think you could bluff me?" he concluded with illogical anger.

Newlin grinned amiably.

"By Jove, you're a nice customer!" he replied. "And a tidy sailorman, too. I—well, I don't risk my money on other kinds. Now if our friend, the new skipper of the *Sea Otter*, will excuse us, we'll talk a little business, captain."

For a week, I saw little of either my employer or Adrian. They busied themselves over charts, papers, and low-voiced discussions behind the walls. Then Newlin wakened me from a doze by the fire and said crisply:

"Have your vessel ready for sea tomorrow. We'll see Captain Deptford partly on his way."

I had a brief confab with my friend later, and he answered my inquiries as to how he expected to get round Barrow by saying that Newlin had a whalersman moored south of the Point, ready to sail into the Arctic the minute the ice permitted.

"All right," I answered. "This is May. I'll never see you again. Now I'm convinced that this man Newlin is really a magician. He makes you ask to go to sure destruction. If you perish, he loses nothing, I'll warrant, while if you come back, he'll get returns on all he has spent to date. The man has bewitched you."

Adrian drew me aside.

"It sounds foolish," he murmured in

my ear, "but all this is a blind, man. How about the otter skins he sends south every year? And where does he get all his money? I'll know before I'm through." He tapped my arm with his finger. "And I'll be back, never fear!"

"But you know nothing definite!" I expostulated.

Adrian gazed at me solemnly.

"I have a feeling—a hunch. I can't explain, but I'm bound to go." His eyes glowed on mine. "Something calls me!"

So we saw him on board the old New Bedford packet, *David and Goliath*, with a crew of scum, and then we turned south in the *Sea Otter*.

"Now," said my employer, blowing the cigar smoke from his wide nostrils, "we'll proceed on other business. We'll visit my hunting grounds. We'll leave Captain Deptford to seek the *Singing Master* and the treasure in her hold. Us for easier money."

"Otter?" I demanded curiously. "No running foul of cruisers for mine, sir."

"Tut-tut!" Newlin said calmly. "You take very little interest in my secret. Just lay a course for this spot." He pointed out a nook far in the recesses of Bering Sea.

We made the island at noon of a terribly rainy day and anchored in a sheltered cove that evening. When the hook was over and the vessel snug, Newlin glanced at me curiously. Then he poured two glasses of liquor and nodded to me.

"You're an odd fish," he said. "Possibly you've visited my little place before?"

"Never."

"Delightful!" he murmured. "So many chaps would give their hopes of salvation to know how and where I get my otter skins. You are actually indifferent. I'll have much pleasure in showing you around. Be good enough

to have a gun fired four times. The folks on shore are very likely unaware of our arrival in this weather."

I obeyed, and within half an hour a launch came alongside in the darkness and a voice called for a painter. It was given, and presently Newlin, who was leaning over the side, exclaimed:

"Well, well, here we are again!"

He reached down, and with a single, powerful heave drew over the schooner's side a young woman who lit on the deck as lightly as a feather. The glare of the big lantern made fast in the main rigging illumined her face completely.

For the moment my thought was, "Newlin's secret is out!" Then I forgot him, forgot the schooner lying in the wash of the short seas, and remembered only that I was a man.

The girl met my eyes calmly and intently. She seemed slightly puzzled.

"This is my daughter, Lady Rose," Newlin said. "Daughter, this is the new captain of the *Sea Otter*."

She bowed civilly, but said nothing. Here I must make the remark that Lady Rose never spoke but once in my hearing, and that at a time I shall tell of anon. Now she merely accepted the introduction with a glance of her clear eyes and then rested them on her father, who seemed highly amused at some secret thought. And yet, behind this outward expression of entertainment—at my embarrassment, I fancied—there was a deep suggestion of pride in having conjured out of the blowing mist so splendid and fascinating a creature! That he had exiled her to this outermost region, treasured her out of knowledge of all men but himself, seemed a mere trifle. She lived and breathed before us, magnificent and perfected.

They went ashore and left me to wild surmises. Why was I and not Adrian picked to be the sole confidant

of this wonderful mystery? Naturally my conclusions were self-flattering.

In the morning, Newlin came back to dawdle about the cabin till afternoon and then suddenly invited me to the beach. I made myself spick and span under his quizzical eyes, and we landed on the strand of a very small cove and presently entered a fine stone house filled with Indian women servants. At a glance, one could see that Lady Rose lived comfortably in her seclusion. And as I observed her manner, her free and unconscious actions, and the ease with which she ruled her household, I perceived that here was no case of a girl who felt imprisoned, abused, or put upon. Yet she uttered never a word.

At nine o'clock, Newlin rather curtly ordered me away and went with me to the ship. Once more in our own snug cabin, he began to mix himself a drink, glancing now and again at me as much as to say: "Well, what's on your mind?"

I found nothing better to say than: "So this is where you get your other."

He broke out in a great laugh.

"By Jove," he said in high amusement, "you *are* clever! Yes, captain, you have guessed correctly. You didn't believe me when I told you we were sailing for that spot. But your instinct is right. This is the place whence flows my fortune—which you covet." His eyes narrowed to slits. "And have you reasoned it out? Can you explain why you are so sure that this is my hunting ground? Have you, too, a slight knowledge of the peculiar ways of nature?"

"Me?" I said in astonishment. "No, I merely thought—I felt——"

Newlin recovered his good humor instantly.

"You 'felt' that this was the place, did you?" He patted the table with the palm of his hand. "And you are right. My dear sir, you have the proper in-

tutions. If you only knew how to use them intelligently, you would succeed in life. You would become fortunate and famous. Yet, I warrant you, it will come to nothing in your case by 'feeling.'" He tapped his forehead. "Brains are what you need, captain."

"To win your daughter?" I demanded boldly.

He was unoffended.

"Ah! Well, most men woo unintelligently. Lady Rose is—ah—as you intimate, eligible. I venture to say that when she marries—a contingency I am prepared for as a fond father—it will be to a man of brains—and breeding. You take my meaning, captain?"

An obscure flash of understanding broke across my mental sky.

"By Jove, you're going to pick the man yourself!" I said. "You're afraid of some fellows, like Deptford. You use 'em and then send 'em after—the *Singing Master*. They don't come back."

Newlin nodded.

"Excellent! You are almost human, my dear captain! I enjoy confiding in you. So sympathetic!"

There was that in the man's tone that froze my blood, yet I managed to shut my eyes to the menace in his feline attitude and say:

"I see. Adrian will not come back."

"Not unless he lays his hands on something like two millions," Newlin admitted indifferently. "In that case, I—er—might consider his claims. Yet while I am, as you suggest, a little afraid of Captain Deptford, I feel that he is negligible. Your ready understanding tempts me to explain more fully." He glanced at me wickedly. "Deptford has already shown me that he amounts to little. It is odd how nearly every man who is on the right road from following his own natural intuitions will use what he calls his 'judgment' at the last moment and abandon the true prize for a will-o'-the-

wisp. Take Deptford, for instance. Instinct brings him north. Instinct, I say. And just when he is about to discover what he has been blindly, but accurately seeking—he goes off to find the *Singing Master*. I put it to you as a highly intelligent man whether Lady Rose isn't a bigger prize than a vessel lost these ten years in the ice beyond Barrow?"

I was revolted.

"What price do you ask for your daughter's hand?" I growled.

Newlin drew himself up haughtily.

"No impertinence!" he said in a sharp voice.

"Well," I said, "you seem to put a price on her yourself."

"That is your lack of intelligence," he responded. He stared down at the table. "What fools men are!" he said bitterly. "Brute beasts have more sense. Men call me a magician because I use the instincts of beasts for my own purposes. Of all created things, it is only man who goes astray. He feels the tug and pull of natural law—and fights it and loses. For a minute, I took Deptford for a real man."

"But he went on your say-so," I insisted.

Newlin nodded morosely.

"True. He fell into the trap just as other men before him did. I tell you Captain Deptford was a gentleman by birth and education. I— Well, I would have given him a chance. But he turned quick as a flash from his real prize and went after the *Singing Master*. Like all the rest! It makes one disgusted with his own kind."

"Do you follow your own instincts?" I demanded.

He glowered at me.

"Always." He rose uneasily and paced the deck. "Yet I've delayed a long time. I must get south." He stared at the gray disk of a port light a moment, as if he saw some sinister image framed in its blankness. "It's

deadly up here. I shan't live out my time if I linger." He fell into a deep muse.

I sat opposite him and contemplated Newlin's history and my own strange position. I was fully aware that never before had the man permitted any one to penetrate his secrets. Why had he allowed me to know as much as I did? I must watch out for myself. The man had soured, gone bad in the North as men will when shut off from society. I tried to be angry at his duping Adrian, yet had to allow that he was correct in despising him for being so easily led off on a wild chase where other men had perished. Then I thought of the girl, shut up here in the power of this unnatural parent, forbidden to enjoy her youth and beauty, used as a—

I leaped up at thought of what the Honorable T. News Newlin was doing with this magnificent creature. My heart was swelled with emotion. I seemed to see her clear eyes fixed on mine in appeal, to see her silent lips move in soundless words that begged me to come to her rescue, to save her from the ignominy of being a decoy to bring hearty, brave men to their destruction.

Newlin's harsh tones brought me to my senses.

"You will not kill me," he said. "I'm not a bit afraid of you. You are suddenly seized with a vague desire to do enormous things, aren't you? Well, forget it, as you slangy Americans say. It's merely a little effervescence of your natural self—the temporary boiling up of instinct. Your cold judgment will tell you to—forget it."

I was astounded to perceive how his words deadened me. I was cast down into a pit of despair. I was a feeble wretch, unable to grasp for the prize of life, a plaything of this incredible despot. And Newlin read my eyes and laughed silently.

"You are a devil!" I muttered.

The bos'n thrust his head in at the door and reported that it was clearing a little. I gave him his instructions for the night and rose. But at the instant a strange sound caught my ear. I halted, alert. And Newlin, too, heard that odd note from the mist-blanketed sea; for he got up slowly and wiped his lips with a white handkerchief.

"Devil, am I?" he said quietly. "Well, my magic works. You shall see it, captain, if it is the last thing you ever do see. Come topside with me."

We emerged from the lit cabin into the dense, damp darkness of the deck. The schooner was dripping from truck to rail, but a faint slice of moon, giving no light, shone above the thin clouds. The wind was salt laden and chill. Yet all this was merely incidental to a strange sense of being crowded in a narrow waterway. I could have sworn that in the mist about us there were other craft moving clumsily to and fro. Instinctively I lifted my voice.

"Show more lights here!" I cried.

"Tut-tut, captain!" said my companion easily. "No danger whatever! See, it is phosphorescent."

I glanced overside and saw the schooner's bends swathed in dull flame which eddied in the tide, now and again blazing more brightly as the short chops ran along the ship's side. I peered around us. I could see nothing, but I knew we were being crowded by invisible craft. In fact— I leaped to the rail.

"By Jove, you *are* touchy to-night!" said the Honorable T. News behind me.

I swung on him desperately.

"We'll be run down!" I said. "It must be Deptford coming back—"

For a second the man's face showed an expression of absolute terror. Then he managed a smile as I went on:

"He's showing no lights, and he'll smash right into us. Hear him!"

There was a sound like the dull sough of a sail filling out to a puff of wind, the splash of a cut-water dipping into the chop. But from another quarter came a short, muffled thud, as of a block coming home. Two vessels making up into that deep cove where the *Sea Otter* had bare room! I snatched up a lantern and waved it.

"Yes, hear them!" said Newlin composedly. "Look overside, captain, and you'll see them! No, not out there! Look down."

I did so, and saw a huge bulk clothed in misty phosphorescence surging through the water, now and again raising a bull-like head to the surface and blowing luminous spray upward.

"Otter!" I said, relieved.

"Exactly," my employer answered. "Now can you guess the secret of this place?"

"I never heard of the animals coming up here," I responded. "What luck for you to discover this island!"

"Wasn't it?" he said dryly. "Thirty thousand a year in my pocket, my dear sir. Just for blindly finding an island. And yet—maybe there is more to it than luck."

I cut through his sarcasm to say:

"Yes, you keep your daughter here."

"Your sense almost pierces my secret," he laughed. "But your logical faculty is feeble. Don't try to argue yourself into lucidity. Let's be off and see the greatest sight available to man. Call away a boat, captain!"

At that very instant, a second otter drove by in a cloud of fire, flinging the water aside with powerful thrusts of his great head. Behind him came a third, more slowly, apparently scenting his way, for he dived deeply as he came abreast of us and rose to give a muffled call.

Once in the boat, Newlin took command, and the sailors pulled sleepily under his direction to another part of the shore than I had visited. Presently

we slipped into a narrow entrance between two very high, rocky cliffs and threaded a deep inlet for a quarter of a mile. Here it closed sharply in to a gate not more than fifty feet wide, and Newlin thrust our boat's bows in on the gravelly beach. We landed together and walked on for a hundred yards to a point whence I looked down some twenty feet into the water.

Here neither wind nor sea could stir the clear depths or mar the surface. By the faint phosphorescence, I could discern the outline of a bowl possibly a hundred yards in length, twenty yards across, and of unknown depth. On every side, the cliff seemed to run up sheer and impassible.

"Now, if you will be so good as to look down carefully," said Newlin.

I peered, and slowly there developed before my eyes a great, vague shadow that moved sluggishly to and fro. Newlin tossed a pebble down, and instantly the shadow flashed into a clear-cut shape. A tremendous sea otter swerved across the pool and back.

"What a beauty!" I cried. "Why not kill her now?"

"You fool!" Newlin said sharply, jerking my revolver out of my hand. "She's a prisoner as it is. Would you spoil my sport?"

"Sport?" I challenged him. "A pelt that size is worth three thousand dollars!"

"That animal is worth thirty thousand a year to me," he answered.

Another pebble splashed into the pool and the otter rose a dozen feet into the air and went back into the water with a roar. That voluminous and plangent sound reëchoed between the high cliffs and shredded the darkness into a jangling tumult. The tumult died, and from the far-away entrance to the sea came an answering bellow that rumbled into silence far above us.

"Hear it!" shouted Newlin, clutching my arm. "Magic, my boy! The

magic of the universe you live in so blindly! Magic!"

I stared at him as he stood on the rock, lit by the faint glimmer of the moon riding among the cirrus clouds. His dark, cynical visage was illumined by an expression of triumph, of ecstasy. His eyes glowed like embers.

"Fools call me a sorcerer and pry into my secrets! And it is the universal law of all flesh that the male shall seek its mate the world over! Male seeking female, through hemispheres of seas! Hear them come!"

The otter in the pool uttered a long, muffled call, and from the sea beyond the gate swept up the responsive chorus, deep, rotund, and magnificent. The moon faded behind a cloud, and the darkness palpitated amid the dripping cliffs.

"You have that narrow entrance barred," I murmured presently.

"A chain net," he answered with his usual calm. "And when I'm ready for hunting, I go and get them, these foolish bulls drawn here by the call of their blood. I keep the female a prisoner and—they come to my rifle and spear because it is the law. Beasts and men!"

"Men?" I repeated.

"Men," my companion answered. "Look at them come! The biggest and best—those skippers who have made me my fortune in the Arctic, the men who went for the *Singing Master* and its treasure—your friend, Adrian Deptford. Of course they come!"

"By Jove, your daughter is a prisoner, too!" I said in an appalled whisper. "A decoy?"

Newlin scowled blackly on me.

"I don't like your way of speaking," he said in a cold voice.

"Why blink it?" I demanded, moved with wrath at thought of the man's devilish and inordinate ingenuity. "You seize on men's highest instincts for your own base purposes. Some day the

man will come who will trample you under foot and crush you."

He answered me scornfully:

"Otters are my prey. Men are even easier to handle. All my life I have used both for my purposes." He laughed into the echoing darkness. "I'm not afraid! Both are under the spell of my magic. They follow their instincts only so far. Nothing tells them that here is death."

"Murderer!" I whispered. "Some day——"

"Some day I'm going south," he returned. "Meanwhile, my otters come and I shoot them. Great sport! For you know an otter sinks when it dies. One must be quick, to get the carcass after the shot. One doesn't make thirty thousand a year without using one's wits."

The man put our whole conversation on a basis of mere business, and I was forced to be content with the feeling that I had had one glimpse of his wicked soul, a soul unmoved by human motives and irresponsive to human impulses. I gained but a single satisfaction before we returned over a sea now quiet and soundless. I spoke of Adrian.

Newlin answered me simply:

"I do many things for the sport of them. Other things I do because they are necessary. Finding the *Singing Master* and her cargo has been both amusement and necessity. I've put it up to some men just to see what imbeciles they are. Others—well, your friend Adrian was too ambitious. And he had breeding. He was a single-minded man, this friend of yours. It would have been either he or I." Newlin chuckled. "And he's gone after the *Singing Master*."

"What if he finds her?" I demanded.

"I wonder!" was the reply. "You know the fellow said he always felt he must go north. Those otter respond to just such a feeling. But we need bother no more with Captain Deptford."

For three days we lay at anchor while a gale blew outside. I heard and saw no more otter, but I observed Newlin busy with his guns and lances. Now and then he would laugh to himself.

The morning of the fourth day it cleared into a still, vapory day such as often follow storms in those latitudes. Newlin awakened early and announced that he was going hunting with two of the crew. They came back at evening without a skin, and the man walked the deck all night. At dawn he studied the sky a while and shook his head.

"The otter have scented some danger," he said. "Weather, probably."

"It will be full moon to-morrow," I remarked.

"And high tide at midnight," he added.

Then he turned in and slept till dusk. He joined me at supper, and later we smoked a cigar on deck, while the fog eddied down and shrouded shore and cliffs in cottony blankets.

"To-night," Newlin said, "is our night. Come along, if you like."

So at nine o'clock I found myself again on the little beach of the inlet where the female otter was imprisoned. Newlin remained in a canoe outside the net with a single Indian paddler. He seemed thoughtful and drait. He merely lifted his head now and then when the captive raised her voice in a husky call. There was no other sound, no response from the sea. I watched the buoys on the net surge as the otter inside brushed its meshes in her circlings.

"Your magic doesn't seem to work," I called to him after a while.

He held up one hand. There was a dull, almost inaudible, yet tremendous sound from seaward. It gathered strength slowly. A single loud, angry roar suddenly filled the interval between the cliffs. The captive surged against the net. Newlin got ready his

rifle. The glint of moonlight on its sinister barrel made me sick. The Indian lay to his paddle.

The bull came in silently, moving a few feet below the surface, till he was opposite Newlin. Then he lifted his great head out of the water and started his call. A flash, the terrific report of the explosion, and the great body fell back and over. With incredible quickness, the Indian drove a barbed lance into the muscles of the neck and drew the attached line taut.

"One," said Newlin calmly. "Haul it in, captain."

The Indian flung me the end of the line, and I drew the prodigious body into the shallows, where it rolled gently and filmed the water with blood.

"Won't the blood warn others?" I demanded.

Newlin laughed mockingly.

"Blood? Man, did the smell of it or the sight of it ever do more than send a man faster to his fate? The otter will come the quicker for it."

Half an hour later, he got a second, a small one with an ugly rip back of the shoulder.

"They're fighting among themselves outside," Newlin said simply.

For an hour we waited unavailingly for a third. Newlin seemed not at all impatient and indulged in occasional snatches of argument with me.

"My own notion—this catching a female and imprisoning her," he told me. "My way of making nature bring my game to my gun. Pretty, is it not?"

Again he remarked on the brightness of the moon.

"I've heard the saying in the States, 'What's a moon without a man?' A million men have heard that—and not one saw the tremendous secret it expresses, the magical secret of nature."

"You're a philosopher," I sneered.

He took it easily.

"I am. But of an unusual kind. I profitably practice my philosophy."

"Some day—eh?—you will perish by it, like other men," I suggested.

At first I thought that the man's expression was one of rage at my remark. Then I seemed to see a hint of dread in his attitude. I looked behind me. Lady Rose was poised on a little shelf twenty feet up. She was dressed in gray from head to foot, and the moon lit her beauty. She appeared to be quite apart from the scene, to be, in fact, unconscious of our presence and of the deadly meaning of it all. Her eyes were fixed on some point beyond the entrance to the inlet.

"Rose!" called her father hoarsely. "What are you doing here?"

She made no response and did not hear, I believe. Newlin motioned the Indian to thrust the canoe to shore. He was evidently wild with anger and surprise. But at the moment a tremendous bulk surged up alongside and—I believe not knowing what he was doing—the Honorable T. News jerked up his rifle and fired.

The otter received the bullet in his heart and flung himself far out of the water. The thunder of his fall backward filled the great cavern, but above it I heard Newlin's sharp shout to the Indian, who sat paralyzed at the unexpectedness of the affair, without lifting his harpoon. Newlin clipped it out of its rest and hurled it into the sinking body. Then, as if recalling her, he looked up again at his daughter.

She still stood there, in a natural and unstudied pose, and she had not seen the tragedy below. That was sure, for her eyes were set on something invisible to us. I saw that her lips were gently parted, as if she barely breathed.

Suddenly Newlin spun round and stared out toward the entrance. A boat was swinging in, and one glance told me who it was. Adrian stood in the stern, alone, sculling his little craft in with long, powerful strokes that made the water foam. And his eyes were

raised to the figure on the rocky shelf above us.

In the instant, it struck me that the Honorable T. News Newlin's house of magic was tumbling about his ears. Adrian Deptford had *not* gone north after the *Singing Master*, and the secret of the twenty-six otter skins a year lay as open as day before him. But more than all else, I saw that Newlin's greatest treasure, his daughter, was lost to him forever unless—

"Rose, go home!" roared Newlin in a voice strangled with passion. He turned on the advancing boat and thundered furiously. "You *would* defy me, would you? No man has ever done that and lived to boast of it!"

He aimed his rifle at Adrian, and I saw death's finger on the trigger. I tried to call out, but my voice stuck in my throat. And Adrian merely glanced at the man who threatened him and laughed huskily and triumphantly. The boat swam up to the little ledge below the girl, and he lifted his arms toward her. She stared down, her still face set in lovely lines of self-forgetfulness, of utter absorption, as if she had wakened to a new world.

"Stop!" cried Newlin, his finger fumbling at the trigger.

Neither Adrian nor the girl heard or attended. The rifle steadied. I held my breath. The man's face was contorted with fiendish anger, as if the breaking of the spell he had so often worked had evoked his vilest and most sinister spirit. Or was it the futile rage of the magician whose own enchantments turn on him, the desperate last endeavor of the sorcerer whose sorcery has fallen back on himself? Who shall know?

For at that instant the captive within the net gave a muffled call, and through the entrance from the sea drove a huge bull, muzzle out of the water, eyes fiery, his huge shoulders heaving the brine in

foam about him. The Indian caught a glimpse of this apparition and vented a yell. Newlin hesitated, spun round, and fired blindly at the otter. It swerved, plunged for the canoe, and in a swirl of spray and spume they vanished.

A moment later, I saw the Indian clinging to the overturned craft and Newlin, knife in hand, swimming desperately to evade the rushes of the now thoroughly enraged animal. Twice he succeeded by superhuman efforts in avoiding its tushes and driving his feeble weapon into its great body. Then the beast rose and overwhelmed him. The pool subsided, and I dragged the Indian ashore where he tumbled in a chattering heap. Then I remembered the two people above me.

They stood hand in hand, close together, looking down at me with a far-away expression of ecstasy. If they had seen the tragedy, it had made no break in their mood. Death and life were one to them. They seemed poised as if for flight.

Whither?

The otter within the net lifted her melancholy note. The bull swam easily toward her, nuzzling the chains. Then I heard Lady Rose's voice for the first

and only time in my life. Not for my ears! No articulate word for me who stared up. Only a sweet and perfect sound for the ears of her mate.

I went and unloosed the end of the net. The buoys drifted away and made the captive otter free. She swam gently off, with the bull surging by her side, till they lifted to the scent of the open sea and vanished.

Then I took my boat and departed also, making for the schooner. Just outside the inlet, I passed the high hull and lofty spars of the *David and Goliath* at anchor. A heavily muffled figure appeared at the rail and hailed me.

"What was all that uproar in there?" he demanded of me.

"Magic," I called up.

"I don't care much for this kind of doings," continued the man in an aggrieved tone. "First off we sail for the Arctic, and then the skipper suddenly sniffs the air and takes it into his head to sail for this God-forsaken spot in Bering. What next? Is everybody crazy?"

I found no answer. Far out at sea, an otter raised his note and thrashed under the moon, still fast in the universal spell, though our sorcerer was dead.



NIGHT PLAY

By Bonnie R. Ginger

TO-NIGHT the children fill the street
With clamor of their play,
As it has scarcely been ever, or day
Or night, all summer long,
When their wild feet
Danced, and their sweet
Child madness made the housetops echo young.

This is November, and the frost has been
Already; but to-day
Came burning sun and balm'd the hours, and they
Were softest after sunset time. Now, in
The moonlit street, the children play
Madly for joy again—
Joy of this mellow night
That less is like November than
July.

So might,
If they could play, the last wild flowers hold
Their revels where they blossom still
In amethyst and gold
In the far country lanes, and fill
The moonlit meadows with their rapture calls
Before death falls.

(Cannot you see the riot of their hues,
Those last wild flowers—purples, golds, and blues?
Or maybe they have gone—
The frost of yesternight,
It may have slain the flowers, every one.)

Our children in the street,
Dear God, are not as they
The flowers of yesterday?
We, who are grown, we know
The months are fleet.
Autumn will pass; even winter will go;
Spring comes from the melted snow;
Golden nights follow the summer sun.

When the months have run,
Give back to the street,
These playing children—dear God, every one!

The Duchess in Pursuit

By I. A. R. Wylie

Author of "The Paupers of Portman Square," "The Day of Days," etc.



III.—"Intermezzo"

You have read how the elderly Duchess of Ashminster wakes up suddenly one fine spring day to the fact that she is being bored into premature old age by her sheltered, conventional life, and seizes a Heaven-sent opportunity to slip away from it all for a little taste of freedom. One of her first encounters is with a young woman of the underworld who takes her for a fugitive from justice and advises her to dye her lovely white hair, as a means of escaping detection. The duchess, carried away by the spirit of adventure, rashly accepts the advice, realizing too late that what's dyed cannot be undyed. Rather than face her conservative friends and acquaintances with coal-black locks, she resolves to continue her adventures incognito until the dye wears off.

IT was impossible to keep the affair secret.

The whole of the duchess' world, and a good part of the world which regards duchesses and their kind somewhat in the light of interesting national relics, rang with it for the proverbial nine days and even more. And it must be admitted that the conduct of an elderly English duchess of irreproachable character who suddenly breaks her moorings and sets out on a sea of adventure without allowing the world so much as an explanatory interview is sufficiently startling to give rise to a crop of rumors.

The behavior of the duchess' daughter, the Lady Angela, made matters considerably worse, too. If the Lady Angela had only been at all what she should have been, it is possible that her mother's escapade might have been sprinkled with a decent oblivion, at any rate until her return to the fold. As it

was, the Lady Angela kept the scandal alive by adding one of her own. In so doing, she surprised no one. Society had long since ceased to be surprised at anything the Lady Angela did, though it was unceasingly dismayed. A duchess' daughter who refuses to attend smart functions, who haunts art schools, associates with quite impossible people, and wears impossible clothes, smacks of red revolution and the guillotine.

The fact that she was just twenty and rather pretty and more than rather lovable added to the seriousness of her offense.

More than one earnest attempt had been made at reform. The duchess had tried, and now that she had gone—thereby seeming to offer a silent, but vivid explanation of Angela's amazingness—Sir John O'Neill, the Lady Angela's appointed guardian, supported by a series of baffled chaperons, had at-

tempted the task with even less success. The Lady Angela, with the bit well between her teeth, careered wildly along her chosen course.

Something like anarchy ensued. The solemn ducal residence in Park Lane, the scene of how many great historical gatherings, became a club for impossible people who dropped in at all hours of the day and night to partake of the perpetual picnic in the Georgian dining room and to discuss pre-Raphaelite futurism, or something that sounded like that, in the Louis XV. drawing-room, to the horror of James, the footman.

On her twentieth birthday, the Lady Angela gave a feast which was merely a larger, severer attack of the chronic picnic. The whole house swarmed like a hotel. In the remotest fastnesses, hungry, feverishly enthusiastic individuals could be found talking cubes and triangles over chicken-and-cress sandwiches. Strains of Debussy and other more jovial moderns issued from the state music room. It was a wonderful and terrible evening.

The Lady Angela and those dearest to her were assembled in the drawing-room. For all that she wore her oldest clothes, she looked exceedingly charming as she stood by the fire, ruffling her already curly hair with a restless hand as she quarreled with a Dante-visaged youth on the question of the function of art in the twentieth century. The rest of her guests were ranged about the room in various attitudes of picturesque ease. The male part of the population wore its hair long, and the womenfolk showed a tendency to wear it short, and they were all shabby. There was, indeed, a general suggestion that to be deliberately agreeable to the eye is an offense against art.

A young man stood at the Lady Angela's side. He did not join in the conversation nor was he apparently interested in the Dante-visaged youth. His

whole attention was given to the Lady Angela, whether she was talking or not. He had ruddy hair and a face that would have been quite objectionably beautiful had it not been for the strength and vigor and joy of life that were carved into every classic line and that burned in the fine blue eyes. His clothes were shabby and no doubt ready made, but he carried his lithe young body too well for them to look grotesque.

Presently he touched the Lady Angela's elbow.

"I want to show you something," he said. "Do come!"

It was not a whisper, and it cut very rudely through the Dante-visaged youth's discourse, and it speaks well for the real character of the Lady Angela's friends that when she slipped her arm through the interrupter's arm and left the Dante-visaged youth and art's function in the twentieth century in mid-air, the former accepted the situation and went off in search of another sandwich with perfect good humor.

The Lady Angela and her companion, meantime, sought an untenanted corner in the great mansion. Some sort of understanding must have existed between them, for without discussion they made their way to the portrait gallery in the west wing where, as yet, the revelers had not penetrated. The place was softly lit by cunningly concealed electric lights which lifted the features of the Lady Angela's ancestors out of the fading backgrounds and made the jewels on the ladies' aristocratic hands sparkle and the martial accoutrements of the gentlemen glitter with living splendor.

Some of the Lady Angela's ancestors were handsome, and some of them, to be quite frank, were not. The Cromwellian under whom the modern couple came to rest had a dour look, as if he had been brought up on "Paradise Lost" and had never quite lost the

taste of it. They gazed up at him for a moment, but without interest.

The young man put his hand into his pocket and drew out a piece of folded paper.

"That's what I wanted to give you," he said. "I did that last night."

She held the neatly written pages to the light and read in silence under his bright, watching eyes. She read very slowly, and when she had done, she looked up and their eyes met.

"Read it to me!" she said.

He obeyed without parley. It was a poem—a love lyric. Whether it was good or bad only the coldest of cold-blooded critics could have told. As well might you tear to pieces the dawn of a spring morning, or the song of a bird, as criticize those fiery, headlong verses. The young man read them in an impassioned undertone, his fine artist's hand clenched on the brass rail beside him, his head so close to the Lady Angela's that the gold and brown of their hair seemed to mingle. When he had finished, they were both silent for a breathless minute, looking at each other.

"That's the first poem you have ever read to me, Robert," she said at last.

"I've written others," he answered. "Every time I see you, a new one is born in me."

"Then you must have written a great many."

"Not nearly enough."

Another silence, in which the Cromwellian gentleman regarded them with an increased sourness. Robert Drake thrust the poem carelessly back into his pocket.

"Old Browne came round to the studio this morning," he said abruptly. "He had promised to have a look at my 'Perseus,' but I didn't really expect him. Well, he stood in front of it—you know how he stands—a sort of waiting-to-pounce look—and then he just shrugged his shoulders and said,

"There's nothing I can tell you, Drake, but there are one or two things in that picture I'd be damned glad to have done.' And then he just stalked out."

The Lady Angela's laugh was subdued and tremulous with a curious, suppressed excitement.

"How like him! But it's true. One day Rossetti's laurels will look faded, Robert."

"If I had you always with me, I could write better verses and paint finer pictures than Rossetti ever dreamed of," he answered, with youth's glorious sincerity. He covered her hand on the rail with his. "Marry me!" he said.

She looked straight at him.

"I want to," she answered quite simply.

The Cromwellian grimaced, and a frivolous, befeathered gentleman of the Restoration Period stared. Such an exhibition of unblushing honesty was equally unknown to both of them. No doubt, disunited as they were on other matters, their blood boiled to the same temperature when their descendant and the unknown, badly dressed plebeian in-folded each other in a second's joyous embrace. They were destined to receive worse shocks. Gently the Lady Angela disengaged herself and lifted a laughing, happy face to her companion's.

"So you will marry me, after all? And what about your principles? You remember what you said!"

"Yes, I do, and I meant it." He kept his arm over her shoulder and they leaned back against the brass rail and grew serious. "But if you were ten times a Lady Something-or-other, I'd marry you. Just because I love you, I'd have to save you. And besides, I've been thinking it over. One's got a duty toward the poor devils. One can't ignore them as if they didn't exist. Supposing we started a mission to the aristocracy—kind of rescue work, you

know. Try to lift them up to our level, educate them—and all that.”

The Lady Angela nodded thoughtfully.

“We might have started on mother,” she considered, “but mother seems to have ideas of her own, and besides, we don’t know where she is. But there’s Sir John and Colonel Magree and Mrs. Cochrane—heaps of them. As Sir John’s my guardian and we want to get married, I think we’d better rescue him first. It’ll want some doing, Robert.”

“Why? You mean he’ll make objections?” The young man threw back his head. “I’d like to see him!” he challenged.

“Well, dear, you probably will. And you mustn’t be impatient with him. You see, he’s old and has antediluvian ideas. And besides, the poor, dear old thing is in an awful state of mind just now about mother. He was madly in love with her when he was a boy and it sort of simmers on. It’s quite pathetic——”

“Rather ridiculous, I should say,” Robert Drake put in somewhat coldly.

“Oh, I don’t know. Perhaps we shall feel like that when we’re old.”

He looked down at her with a smiling tenderness.

“I can’t imagine you old, sweetheart.”

“No, I can’t imagine it, either. It must be perfectly horrid!”

“Beastly! Just as if one were half dead, with all one’s faculties and emotions withered, and a regular nuisance to every one——”

A cough, discreet, yet ironical, interrupted the poet artist’s discourse on old age, and he turned with some annoyance to rebuke the intruder. A tall, slenderly built figure stood in the curtained doorway. Something in the cut of the faultless clothes, in the carriage of the fine head, even in the character of the clean-shaven aristocratic features was vaguely reminiscent of an-

other century. For a moment the young man imagined that an ancestor had stepped down from his frame to challenge him. Then the Lady Angela uttered an exclamation of recognition and qualified pleasure.

“Why, guardian!” she said. “You’re the very person we were talking about.”

“So I gathered,” Sir John O’Neill retorted. He adjusted his eyeglass and, while accepting the Lady Angela’s kiss, regarded her companion with an unflattering interest. “I came here in the faint hope of finding you, Angela,” he continued. “Nobody seemed to know where you were, and the confusion is terrible. May I ask what, exactly, is happening?”

“It’s my birthday feast,” she explained.

“Is it? I have read descriptions of a Bank Holiday on Hampstead Heath which suggest comparisons. Personally, I have never encountered such an extraordinary assembly. I wonder, Angela, whether you ever consider what your mother would feel if she knew what you are doing?”

The Lady Angela chuckled.

“And I wonder if mother ever considers what I should feel if I knew what she was doing,” she retorted maliciously.

Sir John found no sufficiently apt answer and the conversation hung fire. Throughout, the two men had continued to stare at each other with an increasing animosity. Now the Lady Angela introduced them. Her guileless sincerity might have inspired admiration at a less painful moment.

“Robert dear, this is our first patient—Sir John O’Neill. Guardian, this is Robert Drake. It’s so fortunate that you’ve come just now. It’ll save my writing to you, and I do hate letters. Robert and I are going to be married.”

The young painter awaited an explosion with haughty indifference, but he

miscalculated the aristocratic temperament. There was not a flicker of change on the primly composed face. The Cromwellian gentleman and the rake of the Restoration Period were not Sir John's ancestors, but he bore them an unmistakable resemblance in his imperturbable pride, his bearing, his "infernal superiority," as the young painter dubbed it mentally with fast-increasing venom.

"And so," said Sir John amicably, "you propose marrying my ward, Mr. Drake?"

"I do," Mr. Drake returned without embellishment.

"May I ask who you are?"

"My name is already known to you."

Sir John smiled faintly, ironically.

"I am afraid your name conveys very little to me. May I ask—what are you?"

"A man."

"Indeed? The description is not very helpful, Mr. Drake. There are many men——"

"Not so many as you would think," was the bitter and significant answer.

As may be seen, the situation was not improving. The Lady Angela pressed her guardian's arm and frowned restrainingly at her lover.

"Robert is a poet and a painter, guardian," she explained. "He's going to do ever so much for art——"

"No doubt. In the meantime, what does he propose doing for you? I presume, sir, that you are in a position to support Lady Angela in a way becoming to her rank?"

Robert Drake's eyes blazed with the light of battle.

"I despise rank. I abhor your artificial distinctions. I refuse to recognize them. I am Angela's equal and she is mine. That's all I care about."

"I can well believe it." Sir John's manner grew suaver, more polished, in proportion as his opponent's became rude and heated. "But other people

may not think quite as you do, Mr. Drake. They may think that Lady Angela should marry a man of her own world—of her own position."

Robert Drake made a little satirical bow.

"It is my ardent wish to save her from such a hideous fate," he said.

There was a bleak silence. Lady Angela looked half amused, half anxious, but neither of the two men seemed to remember her. They were very angry with each other and with themselves. They had both gone a great deal further than they had meant, Sir John because Drake was so young, so insolently young and ardent, Drake because Sir John was so much older, so self-controlled, so damnably in the right, and because, for all his genuine beliefs, that gallery of crushingly superior people whose painted features were riveted in a sneer at his expense made him feel awkward, plebeian, idiotic.

He stood there glowering sullenly, and it was Sir John who steadied to the attack.

"If you are asking my permission to marry Lady Angela, you are scarcely choosing the most tactful means to persuade me," he began coldly.

"I am not asking your permission."

"Believe me, then, an attempt to propitiate the duchess——"

"Propitiate!" The word acted like the cut of a whip on an aching wound. The young man flung back his fine head. "I wouldn't propitiate her! I'd rather cut off my hand than try! I wouldn't go near her except for Angela's sake! I don't approve of her. She's a member of a parasitic class of idle good-for-nothings——"

"You are not respectful, sir!" Sir John blazed out.

"Why should I be respectful? How should I respect a person who's descended from an imbecile freak like that?" He indicated the outraged Cromwellian gentleman. "Or that!"

And the insulting finger passed on to the bewigged and befeathered follower of the Gay Monarch, who scowled back impatiently.

Lady Angela gasped a little. Sir John's smile was wintry.

"I presume you include my ward in that general denunciation," he remarked grimly.

The young man flashed around.

"I don't! Angela can't help being what she is. She would if she could, wouldn't you, Angela? She thinks as I do, don't you?"

He waited triumphantly. The Lady Angela crimsoned. She had just made the discovery that to say rude things about one's family is a privilege limited to its members.

"I—I don't think you ought to talk like that about my people, Robert," she said. "I think you're—you're rather rude——"

"But you said yourself they were a lot of old frumps."

"Well, it wasn't nice of me, and anyhow they're not your people."

He grew white to the lips—terribly, tragically calm.

"You must choose between them and me, Angela."

"I can't. How ridiculous you are! My people *are* my people. I can't help having ancestors. *You've* got ancestors."

"I haven't."

"You have."

Their eyes met in a blaze of wounded pride, of outraged and betrayed love. Very deliberately Robert Drake took the crumpled lyric and tore it across and across, scattering the pieces over the parquet flooring.

"Finished!" he said. "Finished!"

And he turned and strode headlong from the scene of disaster.

For a minute, neither the Lady Angela nor Sir John moved. The latter caught a glimpse of her profile, and with great wisdom made no attempt at

reproof or consolation. He withdrew quietly to the corridor, to give his ward time to cry away her first grief.

But the Lady Angela did not cry. Instead, she stood in front of the Cromwellian ancestor and returned his disapproving stare with a malignant dislike that would have caused a more sensitive gentleman to fade miserably from the canvas.

II.

Quite a trivial, yet significant incident drew the duchess' attention to the fact that things could not go on as they were.

For six days she had dwelt in the refined seclusion of the Board Residence, No. — Brankenhill Square, Bloomsbury, and during that time she had not only rested from her recent adventures, but had, she firmly believed, escaped the sleuthhounds of the press, whose thirst for an authentic interview must have been literally bloodthirsty. Among her fellow boarders, there was not a soul who suspected the identity of Mrs. Elizabeth Montague—a very natural-sounding *nom de guerre*, the duchess flattered herself. If there was a suspicion anywhere, it lurked in the breast of Mrs. Tykes, the landlady, and it concerned the duchess' solvency rather than her character.

On the seventh morning, this suspicion came to a head. It demonstrated itself in a rather greasy envelope slipped underneath the door. The contents of the envelope indicated that prompt settlement would be acceptable, and there was an unpleasant tone about the whole document that reached even the duchess' unaccustomed ears.

Now the duchess had never had a bill in her own hands before, and for a moment she was quite pleasurably thrilled, much as a schoolboy is thrilled by his first watch. Subsequently, however, it occurred to her that bills expect to be paid and that all the money

she had happened to have about her on her escape had since gone on the bare necessities of life—ridiculous things like toothbrushes, which might have grown on trees, so little had the duchess ever been concerned with their purchase.

She sat in front of her cracked looking-glass and considered herself and her position thoughtfully. She had set out on her adventures a white-haired, middle-aged lady, and the vision in the looking-glass was black-haired and absurdly, rather shockingly youthful looking.

"I could never go back like this," she thought. "I must go away somewhere till the dye works off and I—I look respectable again. It's the only dignified thing to do."

The postponed return gave her so much pleasure that she went down to breakfast in a very cheerful frame of mind, although the problem of the bill remained unsolved.

The hour was late, and the only other occupant of the table was a young man of lean and rather unwholesome appearance who, nevertheless, interested the duchess considerably. In the first place, she had never met anything like him before and, in the second, his conversation at dinner gave her to understand that what Edwin Mortimer didn't know about life wasn't worth knowing. Now the duchess knew nothing at all about life and was correspondingly impressed.

As she entered the murky dining room, Mr. Mortimer, who was also something of a ladies' man and a perfect gentleman to boot, rose and bowed.

"Morning, Mrs. Montague."

"Good morning," the duchess returned pleasantly.

They both settled down to an attack on their cold and dubious sausage, and it was while seeking out the least dubious portions that the bill reoccurred to

the duchess. She looked up, impelled by a sudden inspiration.

"Mr. Mortimer," she said, "you have some experience of the world, haven't you?"

Mr. Mortimer winked.

"Well, just a little," he admitted modestly.

"I mean—no doubt unusual situations are not unfamiliar to you. I wonder if you have ever known any one who was temporarily financially embarrassed—owing for their board and lodging, for instance?"

Mr. Mortimer choked over his coffee.

"The situation is not unfamiliar, madam," he said and patted himself significantly on the breast. "No—not at all unfamiliar, I should say."

"Perhaps, then, you could advise me—I mean what would you do if you were in such a position?"

"You mean what would I do if I were you?"

"Well—yes."

Mr. Edwin Mortimer considered. His eye, lighting on the duchess' rings, brightened with inspiration.

"Pop 'em," he said briefly.

"I beg your pardon?"

"I said—pop 'em." The duchess looked blank. He explained. "Put 'em up the spout—your uncle—you know."

The duchess sighed perplexedly.

"All my uncles are dead," she objected.

Mr. Mortimer exploded.

"Well, mine isn't dead, anyhow," he said. "You come along with me and try him."

An hour later, Elizabeth, Duchess of Ashminster, in company with a seedy youth, came out of a gloomy little doorway over which hung the significant symbol of dire need. The duchess was delicately flushed. She had never had so much money in her own hands before. It was a new, a ridiculously de-

lightful sensation. If you can imagine any one with a house in Park Lane, two or three large domains, and a rent roll running into five figures, being excited over a hundred pounds, you know exactly how the duchess felt.

Mr. Edwin Mortimer regarded her with gloomy awe.

"Fancy *one* of them being worth all that!" he remarked. "Should never have known it. You can settle with our old skinflint and have a good bit over. Wish I could!"

"Why, do you owe her money, too?" the duchess asked.

"Do I? I should just think I do!" He gazed vaguely heavenward. "I say, Mrs. Montague, s'pose you couldn't oblige a fellow with a fiver, could you? Give it you back in three days—honor bright!"

The duchess produced a bank note with a delighted eagerness quite unfamiliar to Mr. Mortimer. He accepted it, regretfully feeling that he had missed the chance of his life.

"Well, you're a good sort, Mrs. Montague, I must say. Anything else I can do for you on the same terms?"

The duchess reflected earnestly.

"I want a house," she said at last. "A furnished house in some desolate spot where I shall never meet a soul. I want it at once. If you can find me one, I shall be very, very grateful."

Mr. Mortimer stared. But the bank note was genuine and his not to reason why.

"Done!" he exclaimed. "If you don't have that house before lunch time, my name's not Edwin. Follow me!"

The duchess followed obediently and trustfully.

The house agent to whom they found their way was at first surprised, then suspicious, ultimately respectful. Mr. Mortimer felt for him. A lady who wanted a furnished house to-morrow,

who refused all references pointblank, who was prepared to pay cash down, and who never so much as inquired after the drains, was a phenomenon. In the end, the house agent accepted her for Mr. Mortimer's excellent reason—the bank notes were genuine—backed by his private knowledge that the house in question was a drug on the market. So a hurried contract was drawn up, and the duchess left the office the tenant of a cottage on the Cornish coast and poorer to the amount of fifty pounds.

Mr. Mortimer was almost abject with respect.

"Money doesn't seem to worry you much, anyhow," he declared. "Might be made of it, the way you toss it about. Well, it's the jolliest morning I've had for a long time—quite the jolliest. Never enjoyed myself so much. Call me up any time. If you want to back a winner or buy a locomotive, I'm your man, and don't you forget it! You're a sport, Mrs. Montague, and when E. Mortimer says a thing, he means it. So long. Toot-a-loo."

"Toot-a-loo!" said the duchess, in a fit of sheer absent-mindedness.

So Mr. Edwin Mortimer set gallant sail for his favorite place of refreshment, and the duchess walked down Regent Street.

It sounds a very unremarkable proceeding, and yet the duchess' heart thumped with excitement. She had never walked down Regent Street or any other street before. She had never looked into shop windows or rubbed shoulders with people who paid her no particular respect. She had always arrived in her victoria and swept through widely opened portals into a bowing, respectful world whose contents seemed created solely for her satisfaction. And now she was pushed and jostled like other mortals, and nobody seemed to care a jot whether she was satisfied or not. She caught a glimpse

of her face in a jeweler's glass, and it was as glowing and happy as a girl's.

The shops had never seemed so pretty. It was springtime. All the gayest and freshest stuffs and dresses decked the windows like the new leaves budding out on the gray, somber tints of winter. There was a blouse which especially caught the duchess' eye. It was the most delicate muslin, sprigged with pink roses. The duchess sighed deeply.

"There were no blouses in my day," she thought. "And now I am too old."

Still, she went into the shop. The shopwalker who swept down upon her frightened her. He was so terribly superior. The duchess murmured something about the seaside and suitable clothes, and she was passed on to a smart young lady with a cheerful eye and a French accent.

"Madame, go to the seaside? Then madame will want somezing light and gay. A few pretty blouses to begin. They will be the very thing for madame."

The duchess' heart literally jumped. "Do you really think so? Well—perhaps if you have something suitable—something like that."

She indicated a dull-gray silk of severe and elderly cut. The young lady with the gay eye laughed and shook her head.

"*Ah, mais non, madame! C'est trop vieux!* It is for a lady already a leetle old. Now if madame will wait, I 'ave something in sprigged muslin—"

"I—I know," said the duchess tremulously. "I saw it in the window, but it wouldn't do. It wouldn't be suitable. It's—it's too young."

"Too young!" The saleswoman positively sparkled indignation and protest. "But madame is young! The muslin is the very thing. *Permettez-moi* to show madame—"

The duchess wavered. She thought how nice French people were—how

understanding. The sprigged muslin danced before her eyes.

"Well—if you really think—if you're quite sure—"

"*Bien sûr, madame!*"

"Well, then, perhaps—perhaps I'll just look at it," said the duchess breathlessly.

III.

The haunts and the friends of Robert Drake knew him no more. He was twenty-three, a rival to Rossetti into the bargain, and he turned his back on life with the finality and bitterness of his kind. In the morning, he went down to the rocky coast destined to be the scene of his premature decease and painted pictures which he destroyed the same evening; in the evening, he wrote odes denouncing women and an effete aristocracy with withering satire, destroying them in the morning. He ate next to nothing, though he was often quite vulgarly hungry, and his clothes were artistically disreputable. There was only one other cottage on the bay, a ramshackle building whose notice, "To let furnished," had a battered, weather-beaten appearance, as if it had stood there a good many years already and expected to stand there for a good many more. Drake regarded it with gloomy satisfaction on his return from his morning's work. When it disappeared, he was thoroughly aggrieved, though also slightly excited. It is a tedious, boring business, dying of a broken heart at the age of twenty-three. He caught himself wondering who the new tenant was, and to atone for such a sign of life, composed a vicious stanza on the unknown vulgarian who was to break in upon the sacred precincts of his grief. But for all that, he kept a watchful eye on the cottage.

On the third morning after the disappearance of the signboard, he saw her.

He himself was seated on a peculiarly dangerous rock, where the spray, lashed up by the wild Atlantic, flung itself joyously about him, and the wind, blowing through his ruddy hair, and his debonair collarless shirt, and his look of profound, yet defiant melancholy, combined to make of him a romantic, Byronic figure. As for her, she stood immediately above him. The thrift that covered the cliffs like a glorious pink carpet made a fairy background for her fragility. She wore her black hair loosely coiled like a girl, and a gay muslin dress, and carried a parasol to match over one shoulder.

Robert Drake could see that her lips moved, but the thunder of the seas drowned her voice, and he could hear nothing. He did not want to hear. He resented her presence. At the same time, it was obviously impossible to sit there in stoic indifference while a lady addressed him. To the last, one must be chivalrous even to a sex that deserves no good of anybody. So he scrambled up the rocks by the most obviously dangerous path and saluted her with as much dignity as one can muster in a stiff southwestern breeze.

"I only wanted to ask you not to sit just there," she said. "I know it's interfering, but it's worried me for the last hour. It's not a bit safe, you know."

"It's perfectly safe for me," he returned grimly.

"Why?" she asked, and smiled. "Are you an immortal?"

"Perhaps." He thought her flippant. At the same time, he was too much an artist not to notice the arched brows over the dark eyes and the beautifully cut nose. "Those whom the gods don't love don't die young," he added with a little ironical bow, and stalked off homeward to mark his extreme displeasure.

He met her again the next morning. She had on a different dress and car-

ried a different parasol. He responded to her now, but coldly. Evidently she was not rebuffed. On the second morning, she wore a smart serge skirt and a muslin blouse sprigged with roses. He noticed the blouse. After all, he considered, it was no use being angry with her. She could not possibly know that he was dying of a broken heart unless he told her, and it is not usual to thrust such information on a total stranger. So he decided on a more gracious bearing when they next met.

But the following morning provided a tempest, with lowering skies and a howling gale and a black sea and an empty cliff. He went home early that day. The little Cornish girl who brought him his provisions from the nearest farm told him, in answer to a casual question, that she cooked for the lady at the cottage. She added that this lady had trunks and trunks of clothes, which gave Drake a vicious satisfaction.

"Idiotic, flighty, soulless creature!" he commented mentally.

That afternoon the tempest rose in fury. Drake sat by the rain-swept window and gazed gloomily at the desolate cottage lying half hidden by the swelling sand dunes. What had brought such a butterfly of a woman to such a desolate spot? Some tragedy, perhaps. The thought gave him a curious thrill of pleasure—a glow of human pity. When darkness descended and shut out the narrowing vista of storm, he lit the lamp and, drawing the shabby curtains, sat down to write. It was a sonnet addressed to "The Unknown."

In the midst of it, some one tapped at the door. Drake rose with a groan. He had barely lifted the latch when the door burst open and the wind whirled a drenched, disheveled, gasping figure straight into his arms. He righted the unexpected apparition, closed the door, and set his back against it. Then, in the flickering lamplight,

he recognized the lady from the cottage.

She looked up at him with a breathless, half-frightened smile.

"I'm your neighbor, you know," she said.

"And I am yours," he answered, unexpectedly gallant, "and at your service."

"I don't know what you will think of me, breaking in like this on you," she went on in little jerks. "I—I interrupted before, and you were very angry. You must be raging this time."

"I'm not," he answered. "Last time was different." Under one arm, she carried a round tin, which she now held out for inspection.

"It's this brought me," she explained, not very lucidly. "It's the only thing I've got for supper. I began opening it last week, and the tin opener broke. I thought perhaps you would do it for me."

Drake examined the tin. It had a jagged, battered look as if many strange implements had been employed on it. He sniffed suspiciously at the contents.

"Are you sure it was only a week ago?" he asked.

"Quite sure."

"Well, anyway, I think it's beyond hope. I'll put it in the coal hole and close the door. It'll be safer there."

Her face fell. If she was not a girl—and he saw now that she was not—she had strangely, pathetically youthful eyes.

"But it's my supper!" she exclaimed hopelessly. "And I'm so hungry!"

"I've got an egg or two in the cupboard," he volunteered. "I don't want them."

"But my fire's gone out. I can't eat raw eggs, can I?"

He considered her, running his hand over his untidy hair. After all, one couldn't be a selfish cad, even if one's heart were broken.

"You shan't eat raw eggs," he said nobly. "I'll cook them for you over my fire."

"Oh, but I couldn't——"

"Why not? Please—I'd like to."

Though it was mere politeness, the last words had a really genuine ring in them that seemed to touch her. Her dark, sparkling eyes met his gayly.

"And I'd like you to, too," she declared. "I'm so dreadfully hungry. It's very good of you, Mr.——"

"Drake," he added, "Robert Drake."

A distinct, an amazed change passed over her features. Her look of confusion, surprise, pleasure, he knew not what, puzzled—delighted him.

"Perhaps you've heard of me," he suggested modestly. "I'm a sort of poet painter, you know."

"Oh, yes—of course I know. I—I've heard so often of you."

He warmed toward her. He brought up the only armchair and cleared away the disordered pile of sketches and melancholy odes.

"And I'm a cook, too," he declared with an amazingly assumed light-heartedness. "Just watch!"

She obeyed literally. Robert Drake liked her unquestioning trust in him. He felt sure that she had read his poems. He had done with women, but still it was nice to meet an appreciative soul.

"Tell me," she said suddenly, "why were you so cross the first time we met?"

Drake straightened his shoulders and looked gloomily at the butter.

"I came down here to be alone," he explained. "I wanted to get away from humanity—from its falsity and humbug—to be alone with nature. That was why."

"I know," she nodded. "That's why I am here—to escape from people. There are times"—she pushed the dark hair back from her forehead, and he noted the beauty of her hand—"there

are times, Mr. Drake, when even our dearest friends are—are unbearable."

"I knew you would understand," he said. "I felt you were different from the rest. You see—poets have a sort of instinct where people are concerned. For instance, I feel I know you quite well. I know what you are. At any rate"—he attacked the bread with a sudden seriousness—"I know what you are not."

"Oh?" she said thoughtfully. "You don't know my name, do you?"

"I don't want to." He came over to inspect the eggs in the boiling water and then stood beside her, flushed, eager, and boyish. "You see, I have my own name for you."

"Have you?"

"I call you 'The Unknown.'"

He fished the eggs out of the water, and she smiled.

"Perhaps—perhaps we'd better leave it at that," she said.

"Yes—I'd rather. Knowledge brings disillusionment." He put the eggs on the table. "Let us forget for a moment the griefs that have brought us here. Let us be simple human beings in this intermezzo—without names—without titles—just ourselves!"

"Intermezzo!" she echoed dreamily. "Without names—or titles. Yes, I like that!"

"Dinner is served!" he announced with a deep bow.

They sat opposite each other and cracked eggs solemnly.

The storm raged without, and they looked up and smiled. They were very happy. And for a poet with a broken heart, Mr. Robert Drake ate an amazing supper.

After that they met every morning. She sat beside him among the thrift, while he painted, or more often he threw his brushes aside and lay full length and declaimed Keats and Shel-

ley, and sometimes Robert Drake, to the blue sky.

He had taken to collars, and the acrimonious odes and sonnets had become triolets and rondos of an almost intoxicated gaiety.

As for her, her stock of dresses—the last always prettier and daintier than its predecessor—seemed unending, and curiously enough aroused no fury in the democratic bosom of the poet. And she herself grew prettier. The color brightened in her cheeks, her eyes sparkled, she held herself straighter, and there was youth in her step. Sometimes she blushed. Of course he knew that she was not a girl or even a very young woman. What did he care? He had done with youth.

One evening, as they sat together and watched the red sun go down in a blaze of glory, he read her his sonnet to "The Unknown." He could see at once that she was deeply moved. Her lips quivered, and there was a suspicious moisture on her long lashes.

"You shouldn't have written that, Robert," she said. She called him Robert now quite simply and naturally. "I am an old woman, and poets don't write poems to old women."

"You're not old!" he answered ardently. "What do the years matter? Your heart is as young and fresh as the flowers. That's all that matters. The years are nothing. I know women in the world"—he jerked his head as if indicating another sphere, and his tone darkened—"girls with faces like angels, whose hearts are as withered and old as a mummy's. I know what their youth is worth, and I despise them! I have done with them!"

She was silent for a moment.

"Is that why you said the gods didn't love you?" she asked.

He nodded.

"How well you understand! Yes, I loved a girl like that. She belonged to that wretched, effete race of good-for-

nothings which we misname the aristocracy. But I thought she was different. I loved her—Heaven knows how I loved her!—and in the end, when the choice had to be made, she chose her own kind—her doddering old ancestors, her bigoted old mother, a senile guardian—the whole caste of half-witted imbeciles wrapped in their mummy clothes of pride and prejudice——”

“Oh, Robert!”

He caught her hand and kissed it.

“Forgive me. I know I am violent—pitiless. But it was my whole life they blighted.”

“But perhaps they didn’t mean to—perhaps they’d be glad to get out of their mummy clothes.”

“Pooh, I’d like to see one of them brave enough!”

She looked dreamily out to sea.

“If one of them did—if one of them were brave enough to set out on an adventure—would you forgive her for being what she was?”

“Rather!” he answered eagerly. “I’d love her for it!”

She smiled.

“How young you are, Robert!”

“Old in disappointment and pain!” he retorted with recovered gloom. He was tragically silent for a moment and then went on: “If you hadn’t come, I should have made an end to everything. You saved my life. You were so true, so honest. You made me feel I could carry on to the bitter end. Not that it matters to any one now——”

“It matters to me,” she interrupted gravely.

“Does it?”

Her smile was half mocking, half wistful.

“You see, no one ever wrote poems to me before,” she said. “No one has ever given me what you have given me.”

He drew himself up.

“Tell me,” he said, “though there is so little worth having in me—though I

am a cynic and bitter—and—and can never love again as I once did, do you think any one would have me now?”

“Why, of course.”

“Would you?”

She started as if waking from a dream. Her expression—so bewildered, so girlishly startled—went straight to the fragments of his broken heart.

“Marry me!” he whispered hoarsely.

Her lips quivered. She buried her face in her hands, and he could see by the tremor that shook her from time to time how deeply she was moved. Very gently he drew her hands into his. A last ray of clear light shone on her face and the evening wind lifted the ruffled hair from her forehead.

“You are so true, so good!” he murmured.

His burning glance, as if drawn by an irresistible fascination, released her eyes and followed the wayward fluttering of those dark curls.

Then it grew still—terribly still. She saw his horror-stricken pallor, and a little sound that might have been anything—a groan, a sob, even a laugh—escaped her lips.

She got up and began to walk homeward and he followed. Neither of them spoke. But at the door of her cottage, he held her hand a moment.

“I shall await your answer,” he said with grave, almost grim formality.

He went home like a man walking in a dream. The little Cornish girl who tidied for him muttered something about a young lady and a letter, but he pushed her aside and went into his own room and locked the door. A groan burst from his lips.

“Dyed!” he said under his breath. “Dyed! False—everything!”

Then he saw the letter lying on the table. He seized upon it and tore it open. It was a very brief little letter. The handwriting set his broken heart beating at the double.

"I came to tell you I don't care two pins about my silly old ancestors," the Lady Angela had scrawled. "I couldn't bear it any more without you, and I ran away. I meant to marry you. But now I know that you have forgotten, that you never really cared, and I have gone home again. Good-by. Oh, if you only knew what you have done!"

There were tearstains and blots all over the paper. Drake staggered to the door and tore it open. The girl, who was clearing away the débris of the last picnic, answered his violent questions with unmoved brevity. Yes, a young lady had been there. She had gone down to the beach to look for him. Yes, she had come back and written the note. She had been crying. And then she had taken the village fly and driven to the station.

Drake slammed the door on the phlegmatic face. He went back to the table and picked up the crumpled letter. His eyelids burned. He felt as if he were being slowly choked.

"And I shall have to marry her!" he groaned. "I shall have to marry her!"

But it was not of the Lady Angela that he was thinking.

IV.

"It simply cannot be allowed! It must be stopped! Man, think of the scandal! Magree, I tell you—she—the whole thing must be stopped!"

Colonel Magree pursed his lips.

"You're right—absolutely right, O'Neill," he agreed. "It must be stopped. We—our whole set is being made ridiculous. Angela ought to have thought of our feelings. People in love never think of any one but themselves."

"Disgusting! It's a disease. Thank Heaven, we grow out of it!"

The colonel coughed awkwardly, and O'Neill pulled a letter out of his pocket and read extracts from it in a tone of scathing contempt:

"Can't live without him. Wealth and position nothing. Ancestor worship idiotic and barbarian. Did you ever hear such impertinence?"

"Never," said Colonel Magree and scowled prodigiously.

Sir John O'Neill continued to pace backward and forward. Since breakfast the previous day, when Lady Angela's note had been handed him with his coffee, he had scarcely slept and rarely sat down.

Suddenly the telephone rang violently. O'Neill and the colonel almost collided in their eagerness to reach it. The former, having the advantage in length of limb, arrived first and snatched off the receiver.

"What's that? Young couple answering description sailed for New York from Liverpool last night? Good heavens, did you hear that, Magree?"

"I did. That's pretty well finished us, hasn't it?"

"Wretched girl! And her poor mother! It will break her heart! Hullo, there! You're sure of your information? Yes—sounds conclusive. Yes—yes—cable by all means."

The receiver slipped from his powerless fingers. Warned by Magree's cough, he turned and saw the Lady Angela standing in the doorway. The two men, whose pent-up indignation might have been expected to overflow, were perfectly silent. It was the Lady Angela who spoke first.

"You don't need to send that cable," she said. "I haven't gone to New York. I'm here."

"So—so I see." Sir John hung up the receiver without further explanation. "Might I ask—where you have been?" he continued with ferocious suavity.

"I went down to Cornwall to marry Robert. I told you in my letter."

"Thank you. I have that document here. And are you married?"

She came forward and sat down by

the table as if she could no longer stand. Her pallor was pitiful.

"No—I am not married. And I never shall be now."

"Indeed? And why not? Has Mr. Drake changed his mind?"

Sir John was having hard work to keep his temper at boiling point and the gibe was more brutal than he had intended—far more brutal than he felt. Angela turned her eyes to him with a listless directness.

"Yes, he has changed his mind."

"I see. He told you so with his usual directness?"

"No, he didn't tell me. I saw."

"Angela, be good enough to explain."

She was silent a moment, as if too stunned and tired to marshal her thoughts, and then she answered with a dull accuracy.

"I went down to his cottage—I knew where it was—and the girl there told me where to find him. He was sitting on the cliff with a woman. He didn't see me—and he kissed her hand——"

Suddenly she broke down. She cried heavily, without restraint or violence, her face buried in her arms. The two elderly gentlemen regarded her and then each other helplessly. Then a kindly, affectionate smile dawned on Sir John's features. It said very clearly:

"Poor child! But it's all for the best—really a blessing in disguise. Poor child! The first youthful disillusion. We old fogies are past all that, thank Heaven! But still we can understand."

He sat down at her side and laid his fine, aristocratic hand on her arm.

"Angela dear, I do indeed feel for you. I know how you suffer. But you can be thankful you're well rid of such an individual. No doubt he has shown good sense in accepting defeat—in recognizing the insurmountable barriers—Ah, yes, I know reason doesn't appeal to you now. Your pride is hurt—you are jealous. Jealousy is the pas-

sion of youth. When you are as old as I am——"

She lifted her wet face.

"Her hair was dyed," she said irrelevantly. "She had on a muslin dress. She looked like—like a girl of——"

"I know, my dear—a very objectionable, common person, I've no doubt."

"It was mother," said the Lady Angela slowly and distinctly.

Sir John O'Neill rose to his feet as if he had been impelled by invisible force.

"Angela—are you mad?"

"Do you think I don't know my own mother?" she flared back.

"It's—it's monstrous!" He looked about him and, his eyes encountering Magree's purple face, he exploded: "Man, don't stand there like that! Is it nothing to you that—that a young girl's heart should be broken by a good-for-nothing puppy? Do you stand idly by while her most tender feelings—are—are outraged? By Gad, sir, I'm not of that stuff! He shall be called to account! He shall be horsewhipped within an inch of his life! If it were twenty years ago, he should answer to me for this at the sword's point!" He tugged ferociously the old-fashioned bell. "Yes, sir, there is still some chivalry in the world, though you may have forgotten it. Angela—that—young blackguard shall pay for his infernal impertinence—his infernal heartlessness! How dare he? Blake—a Bradshaw, and see that my valise is packed at once. Order round the car instantly."

He was gone. Magree, who had remained discreetly stolid by the fireside, ventured to glance at the Lady Angela. But she was no longer crying. Something had begun to dawn behind her grief—something irrepressible, unquerable.

"Colonel," she said, a little huskily,

"do you know how old one has to be before one stops being jealous?"

The colonel shook his head.

"Blessed if I do!"

Then he caught sight of the dawning something in her eyes and burst into a mighty roar of laughter.

V.

The village fly stood, heavily laden, in the sandy road outside. The duchess, in the little parlor, bade its shabby friendliness a wistful farewell. Last night she had laughed until she had cried, and now she felt that the process might be reversed. All that day she had been packing for her flight. Now a kind of flat weariness weighed down upon her. The intermezzo was over and the play was resuming its course. In the window of the little cottage farther up the hill, she could see a light burning. She thought of the broken-hearted, disillusioned poet with an odd, uncomfortable tugging at her own heart. He had been so touchingly in earnest—so chivalrous face to face with her deceit.

She was an old woman, and he had found her out.

And yet she had not felt old. She had caught fire from him—from his comradeship, his admiration. The gay dresses and the free life had had their share, but it had been his faith in her, his belief in her youth that had made her young.

Now it was over. Romance—love—everything—gone.

She caught a glimpse of herself in the glass. She saw the treacherous streak of yellowish-white hair amidst the raven black, and sighed.

The door opened. She turned calmly, expecting to find the caretaker, but it was a man's form that loomed up in the open doorway. A little gasp welcomed him. He came in and closed the door.

His appearance, as much as his sudden advent, held her speechless. She had never conceived it possible that he should look like that. His picturesque white hair was tousled like a boy's. His neckcloth had a bias toward one ear. There was dust on his clothes. He bowed formally, but his whole personality seemed ablaze—seemed to shout violence, riot, and red revolution.

"I ventured to enter unannounced, duchess," he said breathlessly. "I have just had a somewhat painful interview with Mr. Drake. I say painful, but it offered certain compensations. I had no idea that I remembered so much from my young days. Mr. Drake is a strong and fine-spirited young man, but he has no science. I doubt whether he will be able to wish you good-by as he had no doubt intended."

"John—you frighten me! What has happened? Where is he?"

"I left him with his head under the pump."

"What have you done?" she demanded.

He bowed again with the same subdued ferocity.

"I have chastised Mr. Drake for— for his impertinence."

"What impertinence?"

"Angela has told me everything," he answered. "She was down here. She saw you both together. He had the audacity to kiss your hand—"

"It wasn't audacity. He often did it. I liked it."

"Elizabeth!" His hands clenched themselves at his side. He strode across the narrow room as if intending further violence and then strode back again. "I—I am an old friend," he stammered. "I intend saying what I think. You ought to be ashamed—"

"Why?"

"You forget your—your age?"

"Why shouldn't I forget it?"

"You ought to have thought of Angela. You led that young man on. I

know you did. Look at that dress. It's provocation itself."

The duchess sat down. She felt suddenly quite light-hearted. Her eyes were full of calm and happy malice.

"Don't you like the dress?"

"Yes—yes—in a sort of way—but it's a trap—a deliberately laid——"

"It's nothing of the sort. I bought it because I liked it. I came down here in order to give my hair a chance to become gray again without any one knowing. I found this young man here. He was heartbroken about Angela, and very angry with the world in general and bigoted duchesses and senile guardians in particular. I endeavored to reconcile him to our existence. He fell temporarily in love. He asked me to marry him——"

"The young scoundrel!"

"Why? It was a perfectly honorable proposition. We are neither of us married——"

"I wish you were!"

"Do you? Well, anyhow, you can't blame me."

"I don't know." Sir John regarded her grimly. "I can't say that I blame him, anyhow."

"I think that's the first compliment you've paid me for twenty years."

"It isn't—— I mean—how the deuce was I to know that you liked that sort of thing? At our age——"

"Please speak for yourself, John. Age has nothing to do with anything. Mr. Drake proved that to me. He was delightful. He wrote me charming poems. You never wrote me a poem in your life, did you?"

"I can't write poetry," he growled back.

"Well, I don't know that he can, either. But it was charming, all the same. You see, John, he made me feel really, ridiculously young. That's something to be grateful for, isn't it?"

He made a great effort to master his voice.

"Elizabeth—do you—do you care for this young man?"

"John, what right have you to ask such a question?"

"I have a right. I'm Angela's guardian. It's my business——"

"Oh, if you're thinking of Angela——"

"I'm not," he admitted sullenly.

She got up and began gathering up a few frivolous oddments from the table and hurrying them into a frivolous little wrist bag.

"Of course no one could help being very fond of him," she said dreamily. "He's so young and handsome and ardent. I think we are very stupid about rank and position. Mr. Drake is as gallant a gentleman as——"

"Elizabeth, do you care for him?"

His voice shook. It refused to be controlled. The duchess moved with dignity toward the door.

"I have told you I care for him."

He barred her passage.

"Where are you going?"

"Somewhere where my hair can turn white again in peace." She looked up at him wistfully. "I suppose you think I look a terrible fright like this, don't you, John?"

"I—I didn't say so. I like your white hair best—but you're always beautiful, Elizabeth."

"But I'm an old woman all the same. You said so."

"I didn't. I don't think you'll ever be old."

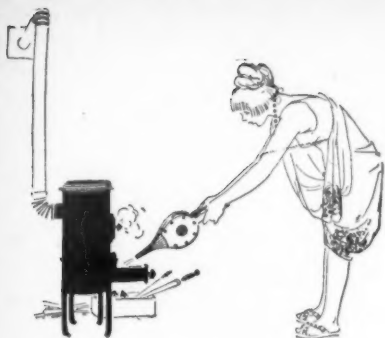
"And you, too—how young you must have felt to fight poor Robert!"

"Yes—like a boy. Elizabeth—do you call him Robert?"

He no longer blocked her passage. She opened the door and looked back at him inscrutably.

"Of course I do. I'm very fond of him." She paused. "I think he'll make a charming son-in-law."

She went out, closing the door softly behind her.



Like Rosie

By Hugh Kahler

Author of "Reggie," "Very Practical," etc.



SHE reminded him of Rosie. Before he had known her ten minutes, his mind had altered a vivid memory of the second-story flat in the two-family wooden cottage out beyond the Car Works, faithful in every detail of installment furniture, new, sticky varnish, brilliant wall paper, but substituting Edith's tall, slim, taffeta-clad figure for Rosie's round, gingham curves, Edith's deep, night-black eyes for Rosie's melting blue ones, Edith's quick, assertive voice for Rosie's soft, slow speech, and, instead of Joe Lippitt's placid, heavy figure, sketching in his own upstanding, alert six feet. All the rest he left unchanged; he could even hear the bray of a phonograph battering away at Hawaiian melodies hot from Broadway. He seemed to catch a warm, spicy smell of broiling steak and strong coffee.

Also, he remembered, quite irrelevantly, that Joe was putting a bit of his weekly twenty-five into the Savings and Loan every Saturday, and that Finck & Brother paid him twenty-five, too. It struck him as a significant coincidence. He realized that the three hundred and fourteen dollars in the bank could be invested in much green plush and painted birch, if— Suddenly, as Edith's eyes held his for a quick, flashing glance, he reddened to his ears. That was a nice way to be

thinking about her—when he'd only known her a minute or two! He stumbled in his speech, grew silent. Darn it! Why did she remind a fellow of Rosie, anyway? What made him think of a flat out beyond the Car Works?

She liked the idea, when he knew her well enough to talk about it—amazing him by reminding him again of Rosie. She was so practical! She made him see at once that it was foolish to live so far away from the office; it meant two car fares every day, and there were lots of little flats within walking distance. Besides, in an apartment you had no furnace to worry about; you escaped the expense of lawns and water taxes; you had janitor service, too. It would save money to take such a place—even at thirty a month, instead of the twenty that Joe and Rosie paid. Jimmie saw it as she did. They signed a lease at thirty-seven-fifty. The extra seven and a half paid for the view.

It was the same with furniture. Imitation mahogany was a very poor investment, Jimmie discovered. It was ever so much better to buy good willow-woven things. And a cheap rug was worse than none; they couldn't afford to be wasteful, you know. The three hundred and fourteen dollars covered the first installments and left enough for two weeks at a pleasant lakeside resort. Edith met some aw-

fully nice people from Lake City there; Jimmie was proud of her ability to make friends. She reminded him less of Rosie, now. Somehow he couldn't see Rosie mixing with Mrs. Fleming and the Dixons. He acquired a vague attitude of patronage toward Joe Lippitt.

But the apartment, somehow, removed that sentiment, after they had settled in it and the first excitement of a home of his own had rubbed thin. Edith's experiments in the kitchen weren't a bit like Rosie Lippitt's. The contrast reminded Jimmie of Rosie with a sort of wistfulness. Edith explained that it was really bad economy for her to do that sort of work. It left her no time for friend making; she couldn't do her share toward their joint progression if she must slave over dishes and scrub floors. So there was the first of a succession of general houseworkers, and the cooking improved—a little. Of course it cost more, but—they were asked to bridge at the Dixons'; and Mrs. Fleming gave a lovely little tea for Edith, at which she met a lot of congenial girls and young wives.

Jimmie was very proud of her, in spite of a worried line between his rather nice eyebrows when the first month's bills came in. Again he thought of Rosie, with a kind of shame at even so much disloyalty to Edith. If Edith were only—well, just a little more like Rosie in some things; if she could only manage as Rosie did—Joe was a little annoying, nowadays; it fretted Jimmie to hear about dinners that cost sixty cents "includin' overhead"—Joe worked in the cost department and spoke its idiom—which would have cost five beans at the Seneca Hotel. It was a kind of affront to be informed that Joe was salting down a five-spot every week—and "livin' high," at that, when Jimmie was beginning to mumble additions to him-

self in the trolley instead of reading the baseball news.

He began to avoid Joe. But he thought about him more than ever—and he thought about Rosie still more. If Edith were only that sort of a wife; instead of— Not that he didn't love her just as much as ever. No, sir! She suited him right down to the ground, but—well, if she had Rosie's knack about running a house, they'd be a lot more comfortable. Let's see—thirty-seven-fifty for the rent—three-twenty for gas— Now where the deuce was it coming from? And he'd need some shoes in another week. If Edith were just a bit more like Rosie—

He was driven by the pressure of nagging petty debts to the courage of desperation. He actually threatened C. Looie Finck with a resignation unless his pay were raised. Edith suggested this as the simplest way out of their difficulties. It surprised him a little to discover that C. Looie could be bluffed. Thirty a week! Gee! He had a brief sensation of wealth. Edith petted him and praised him. They went to a theater to celebrate, instead of to the usual movie. It was two weeks before he realized that thirty dollars is mysteriously no bigger than twenty-five.

In two months, he owed nearly a hundred in small amounts. Edith was rather defiant about it. If he had wanted a cheap wife, he should have chosen one. There were plenty of them. It was his business to provide the funds and hers to spend them. Wasn't she doing her part? Didn't they know nice people and mix with them on even terms, just as if he were—well, a business man instead of a clerk in the Finck office?

Jimmie thought about Rosie more wistfully than ever. He never saw Joe, these days. Somehow the sight of the round, smug, cheerfully vulgar face

always rubbed salt on his raw places. If Edith had been like Rosie—

He tried another bluff on C. Looie. This time his resignation was accepted. He had a moment of fear—sick, giddy funk at the realization that he wasn't attached to a pay roll. He was afraid to tell Edith. She'd blame him. She'd say that he ought to have been cleverer about it. Now if it had been Rosie— Rosie would have sympathized and petted and comforted a fellow. If Joe came home without a job, he'd be sure of encouragement. Rosie— He shook the thought away from him and went to see Adolph Schmidt, chief rival of the Messrs. Finck in the barber-supply trade. His knees tried to vibrate as he came into the ugly office. He didn't dare to stand up. Schmidt would see how scared he was. He dropped into the nearest chair without waiting to be asked.

"Vell, go aheadt," prompted Adolph Schmidt, after a pause.

Jimmie resented the tone. Everybody picked on a fellow when he was down. He spoke tartly. Somehow he didn't want to work for Schmidt, after all. His tone and word showed it. He was half disappointed when Schmidt admitted a vacancy—"fer a hus'ler."

"I coudt giff forty a week—to stardt," he said, eying Jimmie's neat serge; Edith had chosen it and insisted on the tailor, whose bill was among the "please remit" collection in Jimmie's desk. Jimmie's hands closed and his tongue refused to vibrate. "Joost to stardt," apologized Schmidt. "If you mage goot—"

Jimmie remembered a word of Edith's: "If we had fifty a week, you'd see! I could *do* something with that."

"Fifty," he said. He couldn't trust his voice to elaborate the statement.

Schmidt reflected, studied him, surrendered. He began that afternoon. C. Looie refused to let him finish his week, plainly suspecting treason.

Edith made much of him, of course. But he couldn't help wondering what Rosie would say if Joe came home with such news. Fifty a week! Why, Rosie'd save thirty of it. In a year, she'd have fifteen hundred in the bank. And Edith—

"Now I'll be able to get something decent to wear," she was saying dreamily. "There's a suit at Feder's that will just—"

Fifty became suddenly a feeble figure. Jimmie thought of Rosie's bright, clean gingham, of Joe's placid evenings with the sporting extra and the phonograph. If only Edith— Wasn't he ever going to get a chance to lean back and take it easy—like Joe? Was it always going to be a wild scramble to keep up with the bills?

Jimmie glanced about him with a queer impression of having seen the place before. It was a remarkably ugly street of soot-stained frame houses, each an exact counterpart of the others; noisy, frowsy children stopped their play to stare at him; somewhere a baby yelped spitefully. He slowed, glancing about him to locate the dim, vagrant memory. The car crept along the broken curb, like a supercilious woman picking a path across a muddy street. What made him feel as if he knew a shabby slum like this? He hadn't been out this way in years—the Car Works—

Suddenly he remembered. Joe and Rosie had lived here, when the street was new. Some one of these flats had given him his first object lesson in domesticity. His eyes softened a little. What a wonder Rosie had been! By this time she and Joe must be pretty well off. He had a flash of impatience as he thought, irrelevantly, of the garage bill. Of course he could afford a car, now, but suppose he had the price of it in the bank, and a few thousands beside, drawing interest. Sup-

pose he could lie back in a morris chair like the one Joe used to enjoy, and take life easy. If Edith had been like Rosie—just a little like her—

He stopped suddenly. On one of the ugly upper porches a very fat man dozed in a sagging chair. He was in his shirt sleeves, and the cheap fabric showed damp, spreading colors where arm garters held back the cuffs. Jimmie recognized Joe Lippitt instantly. He hesitated. Then, stopping the car, he went up worn, slanting steps and rang the bell. The latch clicked. He climbed a dark, dingy stairway to face Rosie—Rosie in a clean gingham dress, Rosie with her placid pink cheeks and her pale, trusting eyes, Rosie with her bare forearms reddened and roughened and her prettiness faded into a neutral, middle-aged wholesomeness. Somehow Jimmie couldn't help thinking of Edith, as girlish and eager as

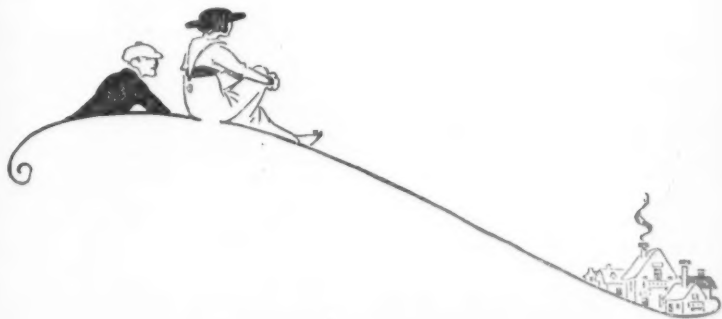
ever, pretty, vivid, incorrigibly unprosaic.

Rosie knew him, made him welcome, woke Joe from his Saturday afternoon nap. They talked, the three of them, of old times. Jimmie wondered, though, how he could have actually liked Joe—even looked up to him. Joe was—well, he fitted in perfectly with the sordid street, the staring paper, the stiff, ugly furniture.

"Yeah, we've got along first-rate," said Joe. "We're real comfortable. Rosie—it's her, o' course. She c'n stretch a nickel like you'd stretch a rubber band. She's a wonder!"

He beamed stickily on Rosie's mild denials. They were happy, Jimmie saw. But—Lord! What a hole to live in! What a life—for a live man! He went down the dark stairs, wondering. Suddenly he laughed.

If Edith had been like Rosie!



OUT OF SCHOOL

WHIRLING, a rainbow mass against the door,
They scatter for the street, one glare of hues—
Shabby, pinned shawl and tattered overcoat,
Red riding-hood and tango-colored scarf;
Flying for freedom like a scattering prism
Of indigos and lilacs, reds and blues—
Italy elbows Greece and Greece, Roumania—
Some for the bun shop, many to the wharf!

LAURA BENET.



FAITH

By Clinton Dangerfield

Author of "Behind the Vell," etc.

YOU—you dare to ask me to refute my own intelligence?"

"I dare to ask you to believe in me," Jasper Denhem returned steadily, his brown eyes resting on the still girlish beauty of his wife.

"Oh—belief!" Anger flamed in her deep blue eyes.

He came a step nearer.

"Edith, is there any such thing as faith in a man if a woman holds it only when faith isn't needed?"

The inquiry of the sentence cut deeply into her consciousness. The words seemed to cry themselves in her ears. She tried to answer, hesitated, remained silent.

They stood facing each other. Near them the fire crackled cheerfully. At Edith Denhem's feet the silks she had dropped when she had risen to declare the resentment overwhelming her made a splash of color as vivid as the deep red of the velour curtains by the tall French windows. The windows were closed and there was no air current to stir the curtains, yet they moved a little, unseen by the absorbed two—moved and then hung quiescent again.

In the hall opposite, Mrs. Ditmar, Edith's mother, paused, staring through the wide entrance at the husband and wife.

Edith kept her mother's affections alive; Jasper Denhem nourished the lady's hates. Mrs. Ditmar had never

become reconciled to giving up her daughter; she regarded Edith as her personal property, something that she had individually created; she had long forgotten to give Edith's dead father any credit in the matter.

Finding Denhem master in his own home and Edith remarkably happy in his mastery, Mrs. Ditmar's frequent visits resolved themselves into periods of frantic desire for some helpful scandal against Denhem, whereby he might be toppled from the pedestal upon which his wife had set him.

In her present opportune approach, she wore a smile of triumphant satisfaction. Reports, recently substantiated, of Denhem's secret visits to the socially impossible widow, Mrs. Livingstone, armed Mrs. Ditmar with the strength of one who feels her quarrel just.

Wasting no further time in listening, she swept into the room. Dominantly, she said:

"Edith is too overcome to answer you, Jasper. I am overcome myself that you should try to impose on my daughter's innocence by asking her to believe in you after your concealed, your secret visits to your——"

"Stop!" commanded Denhem.

"I will *not* stop, Jasper. Edith," turning to her daughter, "if any further proof is needed, I ask you to read this!"

Dramatically she pressed a paper into her daughter's hand. Edith looked at it mechanically. It was a paid check for ten thousand dollars—made out to Grace Livingstone. As she stood staring mutely at the slip, her mother's voice, like thin copper, vibrated metalically on:

"Yes, Jasper, I *did* go to your desk! I did it for my child's sake. I think that even you will admit I was fully justified."

The blue slip fluttered from Edith's fingers to the floor. She said slowly:

"You don't deny that you went to this woman secretly, Jasper, that you meant I shouldn't know you were ever there. And yet you ask me, even after this returned voucher, to believe in you?"

Quietly he drew nearer, but in his face was a desperation of earnestness.

"Edith, I do! In God's name, what is faith? Is it just a pretty word to be bandied about between people while everything is smooth sailing? Or is it sometimes real? And if it is real, isn't it big enough, fine enough, to meet any test?"

The wife's lips parted slightly; her eyes fixed themselves on his.

"Edith," protested Mrs. Ditmar.

"Mother, be quiet. Jasper——"

He came closer. He put his hands on his wife's shoulders and looked down into her uplifted eyes.

"Edith, life is a tremendous thing, full of issues. The only way in which it is livable is through forces, through beliefs, as great as life itself—no, even greater. You took me as your husband believing me a loyal-hearted man. And now, when for the first time your faith in me is tested——"

She broke in, through dry lips:

"But how terribly!"

"Yes, Edith—how terribly! I don't deny visiting secretly this doubtful woman; I don't deny the check; I don't deny I'm sorry you've found out about

the matter; but I declare on my word of honor——"

Mrs. Ditmar gave a contemptuous sniff.

"You let him talk to you in the face of this!"

Jasper Denhem took his hands from his wife's shoulders. But his gaze and hers remained fixed on each other. Mrs. Ditmar had an exasperated feeling that in some inexplicable way he had removed Edith and himself to a great distance where, whatever the result, the decision reached would rest between themselves.

The husband's eyes met those of the wife hungrily, insistently, searchingly. Edith Denhem looked into what seemed to her the very soul of Jasper, risen to meet hers. And as she searched, there came to her what few find in a world of doubts and lies—a faith not for sunshine, but for shadows; a belief not built on evidence, but on unshakable acceptance of another's truth.

The color came back into her pale face; the angry fire in her eyes had become a soft shining as she said quietly:

"You declare on your word of honor, Jasper, that you've nothing to be ashamed of in all this, that you've done nothing disloyal to me?"

"On my word of honor—nothing."

She smiled confidently at him.

"I believe you, Jasper. Let's not speak of this again. Will you pick up my silks? There's a good boy."

Eagerly he lifted the silks, but as he did so, his law-acquired relative found her half-paralyzed tongue.

"Edith," she exploded, "you must be insane! I shall leave this house—leave it *forever*—do you hear?"

"Mother——"

"She can't understand," Jasper Denhem said grimly.

"Understand? I understand more than you seem to think, Jasper!" Mrs.

Ditmar retorted acidulously, two high spots of color in her thin face. I understand that Edith's absurd, incredible, positively idiotic faith in you can't save you from—from——"

"From what a beast like you can do to him, you mean, don't you?" a drawling voice questioned coolly as the curtains at the French windows parted. Grace Livingstone, undulant, assured in her dominant type of brunet beauty, came forward and moved unhurriedly toward the astonished group. She went on, turning to Edith: "Mrs. Denhem, I'm not used to great souls in women. I've mostly found 'em the reverse. But the way you met his call for faith—if there was more of that in married life—well, I guess—— But never mind!"

"You? You?" Mrs. Ditmar gasped.

Mrs. Livingstone turned a leisurely stare on her.

"I came in through the window, closing it after me. I got unexpected news and I wanted to see Jasper at once and alone. I heard that you and your daughter had gone out; it seems you changed your mind at the last moment. When I slipped in, I heard footsteps and hid. I hoped it was Mr. Denhem alone, but his wife was with him. I waited for her to go. She didn't. Mr. Denhem, not knowing I was here, couldn't help the situation——"

"*Situation!*" sneered Mrs. Ditmar.

Grace Livingstone continued calmly: "I came to tell Jasper Denhem that I've inherited a bunch of money from

a grandfather that's been so long in dying I thought he never would. So I'm going away—thousands of miles. And I don't need the other ten thousand he promised me to make up the full price of my silence and the packet of letters."

"Ah—letters!" Hope gleamed triumphantly in Mrs. Ditmar's face. "Pray, tell us about these letters."

"No!" Jasper Denhem cried sharply. "Not a word!"

Grace Livingstone shook her head.

"You mustn't tell me 'no.' Can't you see what's going to be done to you by this righteously indignant in-law of yours? You can't preserve your wife's illusions any longer——"

"I agree with you," Mrs. Ditmar interpolated swiftly.

Mrs. Livingstone smiled.

"I'm glad you agree. Perhaps I'd better give you the letters."

"Mrs. Livingstone," Denhem cried angrily, "you promised——"

"Not to peach. I won't! Mrs. Ditmar, I've been desperately poor, and I love luxuries. So when there came into my possession this packet of letters—the woman to whom they were written died in my arms—I used them to blackmail Jasper Denhem, knowing that he, in his love for his wife, would pay anything to keep her from knowing the truth about—— No—not about himself, Mrs. Ditmar. These letters were written by the late Judge Ditmar to the woman who helped him to forget——you."





PLAYS AND PLAYERS

By

ALAN DALE

PERHAPS, one hundred years from this particular moment, some complacent young theatrical commentator—and, by the bye, don't you think that "commentator" is an improvement upon "reviewer?"—will take down from his library shelf this very number of AINSLEE'S and say to himself:

"I should like to see what happened to the dear old theater during that terrible year of the Great War—that awe-inspiring 1917."

I don't believe that many of the present-day reviewers—I beg pardon, commentators—ever bother about looking back, as it is such a very tedious process, but it is our duty to suppose that posterity will be more studious and careful. Personally, I think that posterity is frightfully overrated, but others hold a different opinion which it is well to consider. It is not at all likely that the complacent young theatrical commentator, one hundred years from to-day, will be nearly as thorough as I am, for instance. Perhaps, by that time, the theater will find itself chronicled under the heading of "Jottings About Town," or something equally noncommittal. Then again, managers will probably write their own reviews—if there be any to write—and "drama" will play peekaboo with "real estate."

Still, somebody will glance at theatrical 1917 apprehensively, and wonder

if war interfered with play. Therefore, with the idea of posterity in my mind, I should really like to be a bit solemn to-day. It would be so dreadful to be called a "cut-up" by one's own great-grandson! I should prefer that the dear little chap might think of me at my best.

The one thing that the warring European nations do not seem to want us to send them is our plays. They clamor for meat and corn and coal and dairy products, but we can keep our drama and permit it to multiply in our midst. We shall never be put on play rations, or be asked to submit to playless weeks. In fact, in the days to come, we may be glad to exchange a couple of first-row aisle seats for a pair of fresh eggs, and an opera box for a porterhouse steak.

By all of which you may perceive that, so far, the theater has not been in the least inconvenienced by our warlike attitude. The theater idea to-day is that we are gloomy, depressed, mentally harassed, and "not quite ourselves," and also that our intellect has suffered somewhat. The theater attempts to treat us as if we were peevish children, cutting our first teeth, or perhaps getting vaccinated. The one thing to avoid, says the theater, is that odious affair known as "uplift." We must not be uplifted, but merely outlifted from our own ponderous grievances.

For the last four weeks, I have seen

more plays than I have ever sat through during any other four weeks of my theatergoing days. Night after night, I have been bidden to the playhouse to watch the antics of the playworld in war time, and I want to make it perfectly clear to posterity that, to me, this has seemed like one of the most flamboyant terrors of war. It was such a formidable outlift!

Think of four weeks including such a varied collection of out-lifting plays as "A Tailor-Made Man," "Leave it to Jane," "This Way Out," "What Happened to Jones," Madame Sarah Bernhardt in a repertoire, "The Masquerader," "De Luxe Annie," "The Country Cousin," "Lucky O'Shea," "Polly with a Past," "Good Night, Paul," "The Pawn," "Rambler Rose," "Over the Phone," "Hamilton," "The Scrap of Paper," "The Family Exit," "Lombardi, Ltd.," "The Riviera Girl," "Here Comes the Bride," "Branded," and "Mother Carey's Chickens." The complacent young commentator of 2017 will discover that nothing remains of any of them, and may feel perfectly certain that he will not be called upon to endure the doubtful joy of a "revival."

The most salient successes of this war-time list were the light-hearted comedies called "A Tailor-Made Man" and "Polly with a Past"—the former occurring at the Cohan and Harris Theatre, and the latter at the Belasco.

This community, individually and collectively, in war time, as in peace time, adores the slick pastime known familiarly as "putting it over." Any play, or any novel, that has for its hero a smart, smug, and plausible young man who, by persuasively magnetic tactics, "puts one over" and "gets away with the goods," is predestined to complete success. In "A Tailor-Made Man," by Harry James Smith, the stellar character purloins some swagger evening clothes and beats his way into the most exclusive society. He is received by a

particularly gorgeous hostess, by all of her well-selected guests, and is instantly taken into the confidence of a most redoubtable "financier," whose life he pretends to have saved.

This "hero" is very suave, extremely fascinating, intensely eager, and deliciously voluble, and the "stunts" he does are those that this public revels in. Perhaps, at other times, there might be fanatics who would call this extremely immoral—there being many other morals than those dealing with sex—but not to-day. The comedy hit the bull's-eye of popular favor and rattled its way into our fastidious affections. The man who "puts one over" we respect; the chap who "has one put over on him" we despise. Our "war attitude" merely seemed to emphasize that.

As for "Polly with a Past," it was one of those archly simple little plays that seemed to say: "I love you too well to uplift you. I am too fond of you to be subtle." Figure to yourself a young man betrothed to an impossible girl whose sole joy in life is redeeming unfortunates. Of course, the young man is not an unfortunate, and therefore scarcely to be redeemed, so she has little use for him. He conceives the scheme of giving her redemption work by means of *Polly*, who is a minister's daughter. *Polly* shall have a past—a riotous and—naturally—French past. He shall fall into her toils, as it were, and his dear betrothed shall redeem him.

Therefore, *Polly* becomes a siren with a Gallic history and a remarkable accent. Seriously—I said I was going to be solemn—I do think that, as France is now our ally, we should treat it more gallantly. The old idea that everything French must be saucy and risqué and smoking-roomy should be discarded. No sooner do we need some spicy lady to lead some unspey youth astray than we insist that she must be French. She could not possibly be American—not

for a minute! We do not make sirens: we are so immaculate that the art of leading astray is foreign to our very instincts. France is always there with its legion of saucy ladies! Of course it is a ridiculous tradition. The French could retaliate, but as they have a keen sense of humor, I dare say that they enjoy being made the scapegoat for all human peccadillos. Of all meek, thoroughly domesticated, and intensely strait-laced people, commend me to the French. However, the stage idea must, I suppose, be upheld, though I sincerely hope that, after the war, all nefarious ladies with pasts, and delicacies of that sort, will be made German. They may not be as chic as the French, but why must the erring lady be so effulgently chic?

I am sure that "Polly with a Past" does not invite this solemn reflection, and that Mr. David Belasco merely intended it for pleasurable recreation, but in these belligerent days, I protest, in the name of France, against the rush to its shores for pasts! We have learned to do without German dyes. Can we never manage to exist without French pasts?

The Washington Square Players certainly made a brave effort to present a play that had all the accompaniments of the conventionally imported French article. I refer to "The Family Exit," by Lawrence Langner, at the Comedy Theater. It would probably be considered very shocking indeed in Paris, where, after all, spice is very artistically interlarded. Mr. Langner went at his task bravely, contriving delicate situations and splashing them all with carefully designed epigrams. He reminded me of little Jack Horner who sat in a corner, eating his Christmas pie—"He put in his thumb, and pulled out a plum, and said, 'What a big boy am I!'"

Mr. Lawrence Langner did seem to be quite a big boy, with "The Family Exit" built around the tribulations of

an old gentleman who returned from France to his native land, with a woman to whom he was not married, and who was consequently relegated to Ellis Island. The situation was really a good one, with boundless opportunities for satire at the expense of our morality—invariably a prolific topic in any clime—but it all deteriorated into farce of a somewhat incoherent type.

However, if playwrights study Mr. Langner carefully, in order to see where he erred, it is conceivable that, in the years to come, we can live on our own spice and cease importing that luxury from France. I may add also—with apologies for prophesying—that France will be busy for countless years rebuilding its drama, and that "decadence," as we love to call it, will undoubtedly be left out of the new count. Lazy playwrights who want to be saucy will be compelled to rely upon the home product. On the whole, "The Family Exit" was an instructive example of our wartime amusements. The critic of 2017 may read this and ponder.

Quite a gala event was made of the Divine Sarah's final appearances at the Knickerbocker Theater—if they *were* final. This was a fine opportunity for the "war spirit," and the "Marseillaise." Poor Sarah! When a brave enthusiast, at one of the final performances, rose in a box and addressed Bernhardt, actually announcing in her presence, and to her, that she was seventy-three—as though she didn't know it!—my spirits sank. When a woman reaches the period for a public announcement of her real age, without protest, the extraordinary has happened. As I looked at Sarah and saw that she did not even squirm as her age was proclaimed, the occasion appeared to me to be as melancholy as it was impertinent. What would happen if a well-meaning enthusiast arose from his seat and told the audience the exact age of Ethel Barrymore, or Billie Burke, or Marjorie

Rambeau, or Julia Sanderson? Can you picture their dismay, and the excited indignation of all the women in the audience? The woman who will placidly allow her years to be mentioned in a mixed gathering is assuredly a curiosity, and this great artist was thus regarded by a callous gathering.

There will be nothing more interesting for posterity to remember than that in this war moment of 1917, France's greatest actress appeared in these United States and was actually labeled "Seventy-three" for the delectation of those morbid ones who ask for a "punch" in their "art."

The strange play with the absurd title of "*De Luxe Annie*" struck me as being rather relevant to these days. The heroine, having been "knocked in the head" and mentally damaged, proceeded to develop a "secondary personality"—according to the phraseology of psychological researchers—and became an out-and-out crook. The fact that her crookedness was merely another phase of her personality was not made clear until the final act, which interfered with the coherence of the play and made you feel that you had endured the first two acts under false pretenses.

But at this particular moment, when thousands of perfectly sound men are receiving wounds that would make those of *De Luxe Annie* seem simple and like surgical child's play, Mr. Edward Clark's "comedy" certainly opens the door wide to manifestations of "secondary personality." All I can hope is that we may be spared the infliction of persistent dramatization of this phenomenon. Years ago, we had "*The Case of Becky*," with Miss Frances Starr, but even that play, which was much more intelligible to the layman than "*De Luxe Annie*," seemed a bit baffling. Mr. Edward Clark was perhaps ahead of his time. That, at least,

is always a consoling thought, though it lacks nourishing qualities.

"*Hamilton*," by Mary Hamlin and George Arliss, dealt with famous figures in history, and was therefore rather appropriate to these times, which are so busy manufacturing history of their own.

I am bound to say that "*Hamilton*" was an exceedingly interesting play, but not because the hero was Alexander Hamilton. It would have been just as entertaining if the central figure had been labeled "Jack Jones."

"*The Scrap of Paper*," by Owen Davis and Arthur Somers Roche, showed how three sinister "financiers" juggled with our food control and our life control, and were silly enough to put their signatures to a scrap of paper that was dramatic enough to blow itself out of a window and into the hands of a crook. Years from to-day, I dare say such things will be considered hilariously ludicrous, and even now they are not devoid of a certain merriment.

One play, "*The Pawn*," was so frightfully serious that it was snuffed out. It dealt with Japan, which apprehensive playwrights love, and which they have the bad taste to dramatize at a time when such imaginings are most distinctly unnecessary.

The other plays on my list have no other object than that set forth by *Johnny* in Bernard Shaw's play "*Misalliance*." Says *Johnny*: "If I buy a book, or go to the theater, I want to forget the shop and forget myself from the moment I go in to the moment I come out. That's what I pay my money for. And if I find that the author's simply getting at me the whole time, I consider that he's obtained my money under false pretenses. I'm not a morbid crank. I'm a natural man, and, as such, I don't like being got at."

The theater-going public seems to agree with *Johnny*.

Continued from page facing page 1.

the year we found that we couldn't. We were confronted by the choice be-

tween higher price and lower ambition. We kept our ambition where it was and raised the price to ten cents.

AINSLIE'S AT TEN CENTS

At the new price, we were able to increase the size of the magazine and add to our list such contributors as F. Marion Crawford, Jerome K. Jerome, Sir Walter Besant, William Le Queux, W. W. Jacobs, I. Zangwill, Lloyd Osbourne, Arthur J. Stringer, Gilbert Parker, Brand Whitlock, Lincoln Steffens, Stephen Crane, F. Hopkinson Smith, Grant Allen, Robert W. Chambers, John Luther Long, and E. W. Hornung. Our circulation slowly, but surely, increased.

In 1900, we discovered the first of the long line of new writers which has caused it to be said that "AINSLIE'S is to-day printing the famous writers of to-morrow." This was Joe Lincoln, the Cape Cod man. Jack London, then little known, found with us a market for those wonderful early tales of the Klondike. It was about a year later that Sidney Porter sent us the first of those score or more stories that were to start him on the road to world fame. O. Henry, Olivier Henry, S. H. Peters, James L. Bliss—no matter what name he wrote under for us, his stories were always "O. Henry."

Frank Norris, Herman Knickerbocker Vielé, Holman F. Day, Harvey J. O'Higgins, Justus Miles Forman, and Anatole France were others who in those days helped make AINSLEE'S "the magazine that entertains."

Along about 1902, the standards of living in this country began to undergo a great change. Automobiles were developing into motor cars, Joe Lincoln started to sign himself Joseph C. Lincoln, and the "simple life" was becoming an expensive fad rather than a daily habit. We again found it necessary to raise our price. But this time it was more of a problem. We thought of fifteen cents for a price. It had never been tried.

"Can't be done," the wise men of the trade all told us.

"Why not?"

"It means two coins. You can sell a magazine for a dime, or for a quarter even, but no one will bother to dig out two coins or wait for change."

This theory interested us so much that we decided to try it out, and AINSLEE'S became the first fifteen-cent magazine ever published.

AINSLIE'S AT FIFTEEN CENTS

Again the circulation jumped forward with the price. So marked was the success of the venture that, in the next year or so, practically every popular magazine in America adopted the new price, the two-coin price which had hitherto been looked upon as impossible. It was this increase in price that enabled us to attract to our pages the work of Joel Chandler Harris, Robert Hichens, Katherine Cecil Thurston,

Baroness von Hutten, Edgar Saltus, Richard Le Gallienne, Gelett Burgess, David Graham Phillips, Mary Heaton Vorse, E. F. Benson, Edith Wharton, May Sinclair, Constance Smedley, Emerson Hough, George Barr McCutcheon, Will Irwin, Harry Leon Wilson, Edith MacVane, Elizabeth Duer, Caroline Duer, Alice Duer Miller, and a host of others.

It was in this period that we printed

Frank Danby's novelette, "Baccarat," and Miriam Michelson's "In the Bishop's Carriage." Three English writers were first made known to American readers through AINSLEE'S: William J. Locke, Leonard Merrick, and Jeffery Farnol.

It was the fifteen-cent AINSLEE'S that inspired the late Oren Root, Hamilton College's famous professor of mathematics, to write to the editor as follows:

"I do not know you, your name, age, lineage, even whether you come of Aryan stock. It does not matter—you make a good magazine. I am a teacher of mathematics—dry business with dry stuff, some think. I also make here and there occasional addresses which I am supposed to think out in my study, while I say 'hush' to my wife and daughter if they enter. I crave to be 'entertained.' AINSLEE'S does this as it pur-

ports to do. I have tried others. AINSLEE'S differs from them as omelet from stale eggs; the others with their fullness of fads growing bitter like overgrown lettuce.

"AINSLEE'S gratifies as well as entertains. Whoever selects its stories knows good English and has a sense of the proportion and fitness of things even in fancy and romance."

We believe we have continued to deserve that letter as much as we did at the time it was written. Glancing over AINSLEE'S for the last year or so, we find contributions in their best vein from Samuel Hopkins Adams, Marie Van Vorst, Alicia Ramsey, Edgar Saltus, Charles Saxby, John Fleming Wilson, Bonnie Ginger, Justin Huntly McCarthy, George Weston, E. Temple Thurston, Countess Barcynska, May Edginton, Henry C. Rowland, and Walter Prichard Eaton.

AINSLEE'S AT TWENTY CENTS

At the new price, we expect to make AINSLEE'S more than ever "the magazine that entertains." How? You can catch a faint glimpse of the road ahead from the present number. Read the novelette. Some day, we believe, we are going to take just as much pride in having introduced E. Goodwin to American readers, as we do in having found Locke, Merrick, and Farnol. Mr. Goodwin contributes a longer novelette, "The Caravan Man," to the January AINSLEE'S. It is an even more joyous affair than "Such Things As Films Are Made Of." Then there is May Edginton's new serial. From this first installment, you can see that it is one of her

very best. And be sure to read Adele Luehrmann's story in this number. It is slight in itself, perhaps, but introduces a heroine who, before many more appearances in AINSLEE'S, will be one of the most attractive features in the magazines. "The Saving Sense" is the title of her January adventure.

Other short fiction in the same issue includes two remarkable Christmas stories, one by Nina Wilcox Putnam, author of "The Impossible Boy," and the other by Leona Dalrymple, who wrote "Diane of the Green Van." "Uncle Heinie and the Major" is one of George Weston's best.



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By E. Sauer, M. D.

Probably no remedy has ever met with such phenomenal success as has Nuxated Iron. It is conservatively estimated that over three million people annually are taking it in this country alone. It has been highly endorsed and used by Former United States Senators and Members of Congress; Physicians who have been connected with well-known hospitals have prescribed and recommended it; Monseigneur Nannini, a prominent Catholic Clergyman, recommends it to all members of the Catholic Church. Former Health Commissioner Wm. R. Kerr, of Chicago, says it ought to be used in every hospital and prescribed by every physician. Sarah Bernhardt—"the Divine Sarah," the world's most noted actress, has ordered a large quantity sent to the French soldiers to help give them strength, power and endurance.

Dr. A. J. Newman, late Police Surgeon of the City of Chicago, and former House Surgeon Jefferson Park Hospital, Chicago, says Nuxated Iron has proven through his own tests of it to excel any preparation he has ever used for creating red blood, building up the nerves, strengthening the muscles and correcting digestive disorders.

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NOTE:—Nuxated Iron, which has been used by former Members of the United States Senate and House of Representatives, and other prominent people with such surprising results, and which is prescribed and recommended above by physicians in such a great variety of cases, is not a patent medicine nor secret remedy, but one which is well known to druggists and whose iron constituents are widely prescribed by eminent physicians everywhere. Unlike the older inorganic iron products, it is easily assimilated, does not injure the teeth, make them black nor upset the stomach; on the contrary it is a most potent remedy in nearly all forms of indigestion as well as for nervous, run-down conditions. The manufacturers have such great confidence in Nuxated Iron, that they offer to forfeit \$100 to any charitable institution if they cannot take any man or woman under 60 who lacks iron and increase their strength 100 per cent. or over in four weeks' time, provided they have no serious organic trouble. They also offer to refund your money if it does not at least double your strength and endurance in ten days' time. It is dispensed by all good druggists.

Statement of the Ownership, Management, etc., required by the Act of Congress of August 24, 1912, of AINSLEE'S, published monthly, at New York, N. Y., for October 1, 1917:

State of New York, County of New York, (ss.) Before me, a Notary Public, in and for the State and county aforesaid, personally appeared George C. Smith, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is Treasurer of Ainslee & Smith Corporation, publishers of AINSLEE'S, and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management, etc., of the aforesaid publication by the Act shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24, 1912, embodied in section 443, Postal Laws and Regulations, to wit:

1. That the names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business managers are: Publishers, Street & Smith Corporation, 79-80 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.; editor, Robert C. Whiting, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.; managing editors, Street & Smith Corporation, 79-80 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.; business manager, Street & Smith Corporation, 79-80 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.

2. That the owners are: Ainslee Magazine Company, Seventh Avenue and Fifteenth Street, New York, N. Y., a corporation, composed of Ormond G. Smith, 89 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.; George Gould, 89 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.; and Charles W. Ostertag, 51 New York County, N. Y.

3. That the known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 per cent. or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities, are: Clarence C. Vermau, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.

4. That the two paragraphs next above, giving the names of the owners, stockholders, and security holders, if any, contain not only the list of stockholders and security holders as they appear upon the books of the company, but also, in cases where the stockholder or security holder appears upon the books of the company as trustee or in any other fiduciary relation, the name of the person or corporation by whom such trustee is acting, is given; and also that the said two paragraphs contain statements embracing affiant's full knowledge and belief as to the circumstances and conditions under which stockholders and security holders who do not appear upon the books of the company as trustees, hold stock and securities in a capacity other than that of a bona fide owner; and this affiant has no reason to believe that any other person, association, or corporation has any interest direct or indirect in the said stock, bonds, or other securities than as so stated by him.

GEORGE C. SMITH, Treasurer, of Street & Smith Corporation, published, sworn to and subscribed before me this 26th day of September, 1917. Charles W. Ostertag, Notary Public, No. 51, New York County. (My commission expires March 30, 1919.)

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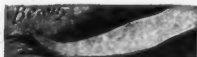
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And the present is personal. In each package the donor may place his personal card, and each package will contain a reply postal so that the soldier whom you gave a happier holiday can thank you for it.

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Enclosed please find
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(One of Our Leaders)

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Our Best Flour..... 2.59 per 49-pound sack
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1 bar Fels Naptha Soap.....	8 cents
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AND OTHER BIG BARGAINS.

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City.....State.....

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